

A Mixed-Method Study of Educator Knowledge and Practice  
Related to Student Socio-moral Development

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## **Abstract**

### **A Mixed-Method Study of Educator Knowledge and Practice Related to Student Socio-moral Development**

The purpose of this study was to explore elementary educators' knowledge of moral development, how this knowledge relates to their beliefs and sense of efficacy pertaining to character education practices and the socio-moral reasoning of their students. It was hypothesized that educators' beliefs and practices related to character education would reflect their pedagogy rather than knowledge of moral development theory. It was further hypothesized that there would be differences in student socio-moral reasoning specifically the *beliefs* and *desires* that guide actions would differ based on grade and gender. This mixed-method study employing self-report questionnaires, open response vignettes, and semi-structured educator interviews yielded quantitative and qualitative data. Findings indicated socio-moral reasoning of students differed according to grade (age) and gender. Knowledge of moral development theory was found to vary among participants however some practices employed by educators did align with a social cognitive approach to moral development. Significant variables identified consistently among educator and student participants included, autonomy, social competence, sense of school community, and supportiveness. These variables, in conjunction with a sense of fairness, have been identified elsewhere as foundational to moral development (Nucci, 2009), and intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and are relevant to educators working to develop student socio-moral reasoning as an aspect of character.

Key words: moral development, character education, socio-moral reasoning, educator practices, Elementary school

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When we sometimes doubt ourselves, as human beings tend to do, it is important that others see the possibility in what we are trying to accomplish and encourage us to persevere.

"Desire is the key to motivation, but it's determination and commitment to an unrelenting pursuit of your goal - a commitment to excellence - that will enable you to attain the success you seek."  
-Mario Andretti

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The purpose of this chapter is to introduce the problem under investigation in the current study as well as the educational rationale. To assist the reader, terms used within are defined in this chapter. Finally, the remaining chapters will be outlined briefly.

### General Statement of the Problem

In one form or another educators have for all time instructed youth in matters of socio-moral development. In the past 2 decades a growing emphasis on youth socialization has resulted in an institutionalized effort known as character education, (McClellan, 1999). Despite these efforts student judgment does not consistently result in positive socio-moral outcomes. Children still cause harm to one another or are unfair to one another, despite being able to articulate how they should have conducted themselves. Enhanced educator understanding and intentional practices related to student socio-moral development may play a critical role in promoting positive inter- and intrapersonal development in youth and yield benefits to society at large by increasing the frequency of positive socio-moral outcomes.

Better understanding of the task, including an appreciation of the relationship between beliefs, desire, and action, is anticipated to be a necessary part of this process. Where *beliefs* are understood to be reflective of the worldview of an individual and are generally passive in nature, *desire* is the motivation to transform this view to suit the needs or wants of an individual (Sokol, Chandler, & Jones, 2004). In this sense, desires drive action, and are informed by beliefs. According to Nucci (2001), the bridge linking *knowing the good* to, *doing the good* is desire “to do what is moral, rather than engage in actions that lead to other goals” (p. 196). *Doing the good* refers to actions which show



consideration for principles of justice and human welfare, and will be considered moral outcomes for the remainder of this study. For these purposes, such individuals will also be considered socially competent. Socially competent children tend to be more focused on relational goals, that is, maintaining relationships, than more aggressive children, who tend to focus mainly on instrumental or personal gain (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004).

Relations between individuals and the context for learning are integral to human development, (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008) and can be mutually beneficial (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000).

The purpose of this mixed-method study was to explore relations between educator knowledge of moral development, their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education, and the socio-moral reasoning of students. In terms of student socio-moral reasoning, this study explored Canadian elementary school students' thoughts and feelings regarding principles of human welfare, justice, and social conventions, as well as different types of motivation.

In recent educational history within North America, England, and Australia, there has been a resurgence of interest in character education (McClellan, 1999; Nucci, 2009; Revell & Arthur, 2007; White & Warfa, 2011). For example, the Ontario Ministry of Education mandated all schools K-12 to implement character education effective September 2007 (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2006, 2007). Education historically responds to society's changing needs (Nucci, 2006). The current focus in Ontario may be viewed as a response to perceived social and moral decay (Bennett, 1998; Putnam, 2003) or a time of rapid adjustment where historical injustices are challenged (Turiel, 2002) and educational institutions attempt to keep up.

Schools within the Catholic system have a religious mandate complete with values and beliefs expected of every member of that community:

In Catholic schools our foundational beliefs about teaching, learning, the profile of the learner, exit outcomes, essential and specific learnings, and program modification all relate directly to our foundational beliefs about the life and work of Jesus Christ and the tradition of the Roman Catholic community which seeks to embody those beliefs, (The Institute for Catholic Education, 1996, p. 5).

Character education within the Catholic education system must support these *foundational beliefs*.<sup>1</sup> By way of contrast, Public education systems are typically culturally and religiously diverse, and for this reason, it is the public education context that is of specific interest in the current investigation.

Simultaneously, research in educational practice for the instruction of literacy and numeracy knowledge and skills has seen a shift from a teacher-directed, to a teacher-facilitated model. This marks a significant change in what happens in classrooms with respect to instructional practice, as the level of control over learning becomes more of a shared responsibility. For example, a gradual release of responsibility model moves from teacher-directed tasks to independent tasks for students and is based at least in part on Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (1978). This model also serves to shift the focus from teaching to learning. The practice of inquiry as a foundation for learning for both students and teachers has seen a greater presence in educational literature (see for example, Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Militello, Rallis, & Goldring, 2009),

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<sup>1</sup> (see <http://ebookbrowse.com/occb-position-paper-on-cdi-final-august-2008-pdf-d98854657> )

emphasizing that educators do not *know* all the answers and like their students, must pursue knowledge to answer their questions. Dewey (1986) introduced the term “warranted assertibility” (p. 16) to replace the term “knowledge” and to emphasize the value of understanding why we come to know something, or the process, and not only what we come to know, or the content. Educators may serve the purpose of ‘mediator’ between content and student thinking, thereby supporting student learning. The Ontario Ministry of Education advocates this type of learning environment, suggesting that it will support the development of strong student self-efficacy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011).

Neiman (2008) argued that, to make sense of the world around us, it is critical that individuals seek justice, not simply rewards and punishments. This understanding is achieved through reflection and cannot be handed down from generation to generation simply as dogmatic rules, particularly in a secular society. Further, humankind must be able to envision and embrace possibilities if an improved reality is ever to be created. Part of what education must accomplish then, is to cultivate in our youth the ability to imagine something better and the desire to act upon these ideals. This calls for guidance from adults, educators, and parents alike. How such guidance is provided is relevant here.

The ease with which information can be accessed through technology including advanced electronic communication tools means an educator is no longer the *sage on the stage* but rather the *guide on the side*, helping youth to navigate the sea of information available to them and use it effectively in their decision making. Educators must know their students as well as the curriculum and understand how to engage learners in their classrooms to benefit fully from an inquiry approach to learning and development.

Technology at the point of learning is increasingly viewed as a tool to support student engagement through the inquiry process. The result is full school reform, a transformation of practice for educators, with the intent of equipping youth with the anticipated skills for the future. Incorporated in this preparedness is advanced development of moral literacy, including the capacity to think critically and respond appropriately in highly complex, novel, and at times disorderly situations that do not conform to any prepackaged rules (Larson, 2011). The ability to imagine something better for humankind, thinking beyond anything that has been done before will be key.

Most commonly, school reform has focused upon educator practices targeting intellectual advancement of children rather than improving socio-moral capacities (Watson, Battistich, & Solomon, 1998). Teachers make countless decisions in a day about their instruction of students, how to cultivate and maintain a classroom climate, and be responsive to student needs. According to Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005), the knowledge and beliefs of educators impact their practice and ultimately the development of their students. Given that professional development of any kind is rarely undertaken for matters of socio-moral development (Nucci, Drill, Larson, & Browne, 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007), how then are educators prepared with the knowledge and understanding to influence their beliefs and practices so they might meet the expectation of assisting parents in developing morally literate youth capable of coping with the complexities of the world they will one day inherit?

Moral development through character education has enjoyed some attention from researchers in different corners of the world including the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, and Canada. Given the interest, it may be expected that an exchange

of information between practitioner and researcher would occur to assist both practitioners and researchers in productively continuing their work. This assumption is not borne out in the literature (Schuitema, Ten Dam, & Veugelers, 2008). Educators typically receive little or no formal training for their professional learning (Nucci, et al., 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007) apart from their own professional reading or attendance at conferences, which may or may not focus on current research-based findings. Further, relations between practitioners and researchers are not uniformly established in educational settings. Despite their initiative to become better informed, educators may not acquire or embrace the knowledge and skills necessary to ensure their practices are consistent with positive socio-moral development of youth.

Confounding issues may include an ill-defined purpose of character education (Benninga, Berkowitz, Kuehn, & Smith, 2006), differing interpretations of *moral* and how morality is advanced (e.g., Is it a social, cognitive, or other process?) (Turiel, 2002), terminology confusion, including understanding of character, moral reasoning, judgment, and social competence, as well as a lack of research related to home-grown strategies and overgeneralized outcomes attributed to branded programs (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; United States Department of Education, 2006). The purpose of this study was to explore: 1) educators' knowledge of moral development and their sense of efficacy and beliefs regarding character education, in relation to; 2) elementary school students' socio-moral reasoning; and 2) their use of instrumental or relational motivation in their reasoning. Long-term goals of this study were to raise the awareness of educators and researchers about the complexity of developing socio-moral reasoning in elementary school age students and further the scholarly discourse in this area.

Most research examining socio-moral development of youth evaluates branded programs (e.g., Tribes) in schools or takes place in laboratories or other artificial environments, using standard dilemma-type questions (see Kohlberg, 1971; U.S. Dept. of Education, 2006 for examples). Typically the living Petri dish of the classroom or school environment, where real situations are encountered daily, requiring guidance from adults in the learning community to support student engagement of moral reasoning and action, is not the milieu for study. Therefore an anticipated outcome was to address this gap in the literature by using a Canadian elementary school based context for participation, focusing specifically on classrooms where no particular branded program for character education is employed within a large southwestern Ontario public school board. Through raising awareness about the complexity of developing socio-moral reasoning, this study may also assist in improving the conditions for educator learning, and ultimately, student outcomes, in Ontario's public school system.

### **Definition of Terms**

The following terms are used throughout this study to define key constructs and are defined below:

1. Morality: pertains to matters of harm, justice, and rights; it must be universal, obligatory, and free from the dictates of authority (Turiel & Smetana, 1984). It incorporates three elements: moral thought or reasoning, moral emotion, and moral action (Rest, 1984). According to Blasi (1980), not only is action the final criterion for determining morality, but that action must be intentional and not by any other means.

2. Moral outcomes: given the definition above, are outcomes that honour principles of justice and human welfare and will be indicative of relational values.
3. Character: According to Berkowitz and Bier (2004), “character is a complex set of psychological characteristics that enable an individual to act as a moral agent” (p. 73). Hunter (2000) defines character as the amalgamation of three properties: *moral discipline*, defined as “the ability to inhibit and direct one’s passions, desires and habits within a larger moral order;” *moral attachment*, “one’s affirmation of commitment to a community and its moral ideals;” and *moral autonomy*, “the ability of an individual to freely make ethical decisions” (p. 2).
4. Moral judgment or reasoning are terms that have been used interchangeably to describe the cognitive processes activated in first understanding a situation, coordinating any conflicting concerns, and then planning a response. More recently, a distinction has been made such that moral reasoning is the thinking that ultimately drives moral judgment (Greene & Haidt, 2002), the planned action. According to a number of developmental studies (see Turiel, Hildebrandt, & Wainryb, 1991 for example), the ways in which information is processed in order to understand and plan a response is impacted by “informational assumptions” (Wainryb & Turiel, 1995, p. 293). The basis for these assumptions depends upon the previous experiences of the individual which may include: understood scientific fact as well as religious upbringing, and reflect what the individual believes to be true. Greene and Haidt (2002) have, through study of impairments to different regions of the brain, also concluded that emotion plays a significant role in moral judgment. While there is debate about the level of conscious reasoning versus intuition present in moral

judgment (see Cushman, Young, & Hauser, 2006 for example), for the purposes of this study, moral reasoning, is considered the thinking process that drives moral judgment. Moral judgment, the conclusion reached by an individual, is composed of three components: belief, desire (which may include emotion), and planned action.

5. Theory of mind is those unobservable processes that develop in infants, through childhood, and beyond which enable an individual to process and respond to external stimuli (Flavell, Miller, & Miller, 2002). Only through the development of theory of mind can an individual explain and predict the actions of others (Flavell, et al., 2002) and inasmuch respond or act suitably given his/her beliefs and desires. Theory of mind then becomes the basis for social understanding and as such will have bearing on the development of an individual's social competence as the sum total of interpersonal skills.
6. Social competence has as its core effective functioning within a social context, where effective functioning is comprised of social accomplishments, global judgment of competence, and peer acceptance (Cavell, 1990). With respect to effective functioning related to morality specifically, Nucci (2001) describes socially competent youth as possessing a desire to do what is moral in a given situation rather than focus on other goals, such that their reasoning and actions are closely aligned. What is moral is considered to pertain to principles of justice and human welfare. Therefore, socially competent youth will not choose personal gain over these principles (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004).
7. The term *socio-moral* is used throughout this study to describe the interaction between social and moral meaning making. The term is hyphenated to be consistent



with other literature in the field (see Keller & Edelstein, 1991; Narvaez & Lapsley, 2014 for example).

### **Purpose and Educational Rationale**

In 2006 the Ontario Ministry of Education formally mandated the delivery of character education throughout Kindergarten to Grade 12 classrooms across the province. This mandate does apply to both the Catholic and public school systems. Catholic school boards have a religious doctrine on which to base their approach to character education (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2007). Yet within a secular and pluralistic society, no such platform exists, and cultural and religious diversity abound. For this reason the focus for this study was within the context of the public school system.

While the Ministry did provide a discussion paper for representatives of boards of education to begin the process, they failed to provide any formal professional development and learning for front line practitioners either in the form of in-service or a guiding principles document upon which educators might have some basis for common understanding and approach to character education. There has been an apparent lack of direction with respect to a preferred character education approach based on moral development theoretical frameworks and available research. Taken together, these two factors leave educators very much to their own devices in determining how to deliver the character education mandate in Ontario. These circumstances are not uniform across Canada, as the Alberta Ministry of Education did, in 2005, produce a guiding principles document (*The Heart of the Matter: Character and Citizenship Education in Alberta Schools*), which they followed with a 2 day professional development plan to assist educators in the delivery of character education in Alberta schools (personal

communication, Alberta Minister of Education's offices). This study sought to raise educators' and researchers' awareness about the complexity of developing socio-moral reasoning in elementary school age students and further the scholarly discourse in this area. Incorporated into this complexity is educator understanding of moral development theory as well as their sense of efficacy and beliefs regarding the delivery of character education. Finally, this study sought to improve the conditions for educator learning, and ultimately, student outcomes, in Ontario's public school system.

This three-phase study explored educator knowledge of moral development, their beliefs and sense of efficacy pertaining to character education practices, and student socio-moral reasoning and judgment. Through this exploration it was hoped conditions under which moral outcome type behaviour among students was more frequently reported would be identified. Data from educators as well as students were gathered through the use of questionnaires. Semi-structured educator interviews for three of the educator participants were also conducted in an effort to deepen understanding of the complex processes at work.

The methodology for this study follows three distinct phases. The first began with educators as the unit of analysis. To gather information about their knowledge of moral development theory and beliefs pertaining to character education practices a three-part questionnaire, The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Moral Development and Education Questionnaire (Nucci, et al., 2005) was employed. The second phase gathered information from students regarding their perspectives on their classroom and school, their socio-moral reasoning, including their beliefs and desires (motivation). To obtain this information a questionnaire previously used to measure the impact of the Child

Development Project, (see Battistich, 2003; Battistich, Schaps, Watson, Solomon, & Lewis, 2000; Battistich, Schaps, & Wilson, 2004) was employed. Finally, to provide further insight into teacher beliefs and classroom practices, interviews were conducted with a smaller sample of educators ( $n = 3$ ). Quantitative data collected are reported separately from qualitative data in the results chapter, and are then discussed together during the discussion.

Specifically, there were seven research questions under consideration in the present study. The first question was are there relations between educator knowledge of moral development and sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education delivery? A second question was, does educator sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education differ based on school setting, years of experience, or grade taught?

Earlier research by Nucci, Drill, Larson, and Browne (2005) that investigated outcomes for preservice educators when moral development theory and character education practice components were added to course work aligned with findings from the current investigation. According to Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005), the educational practices of teachers, including those used to establish learning conditions, are determined in large part by their knowledge and beliefs. Identifying to what extent and in what ways educators use knowledge of moral development theory to guide character education practices they choose to employ was the first goal. Hayward (1999) explored the impact of community factors on levels of control exercised by educators in their classrooms. It was anticipated that findings from the second question would add to this earlier study. It was expected that community factors as perceived by educators, such as

poverty and crime rates, together with educator values and experiences, would influence the practices educators applied in public system schools and the subsequent experiences of students.

The related hypotheses were, first, that educators have limited knowledge of formal moral development theory and instead rely on educational pedagogy related to classroom management to guide their work, and second, that each educator participant would employ different practices intended to enhance student socio-moral development based on their beliefs and sense of efficacy and also on the culture of each school setting. Findings related to these research questions may be helpful in guiding policy makers in identifying areas and methods for further professional development to support full and effective implementation of character education in the province of Ontario, specifically within the public school system.

To explore for relations between educator practices and the learning experiences for students, four research questions were developed. These were intended to address student socio-moral reasoning and judgment relative to classroom learning experiences. Student learning; a socially mediated process is affected by the environment created by educators (Vygotsky, 1934/1986). First, is there a difference in student socio-moral beliefs based on learning conditions? Second, is there a difference in student socio-moral desires (motivation) based on learning conditions? Third, under what conditions are students likely to subordinate and or coordinate the social and moral domains in complex social situations? Fourth, under what conditions do students report behaviour consistent with caring relationships to result in positive moral outcomes? The hypotheses related to these four questions was that students will differ in their socio-moral reasoning (in their

beliefs and desires), their abilities to subordinate and or coordinate the social and moral domains in complex social situations, and in their inclination to use caring relationships in their decision-making depending on gender and grade.

Finally, given that school culture and climate are determined in part by educator pedagogy but also through the actions of all members of the school learning community, the seventh question seeks to determine if any relation exists between socio-moral reasoning and self-reported behaviour of students across participating elementary schools relative to described school culture and educational pedagogy implemented in participating classrooms. The hypothesis was that schools where students and staff are practiced in using principles of justice, human welfare, and relationships as the basis for decision making, a warm and supportive school culture and climate would also be reported.

This study furthers the moral development through character education discourse by focusing on the moral development theoretical knowledge of educators relative to their beliefs and practices related to character education. It was hypothesized that educators would be predisposed to beliefs and strategies which were aligned with their educational pedagogy which may be indicative of their schooling and upbringing experiences rather than direct theoretical moral development knowledge. Without clear understanding of the social, cognitive, and emotional elements related to socio-moral development, it would be difficult for educators to know how to proceed with specific educational strategies (Lapsley, 2008). The knowledge and beliefs of educators are translated into practice, and these practices ultimately affect student development (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). Given this, the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of

educators deserve further study to explore implications for students and to identify conditions under which preferred outcomes are likely.

This three-phase mixed-method study incorporated questionnaires as well as educator interviews to obtain more complete answers to the questions under investigation. A total of 75 participants were drawn from a population of JK–8 schools within a large southwestern Ontario public school board. There were three schools from which participants were obtained, each representing a different demographic: inner city urban, suburban, and rural. In the urban setting there were two participating classrooms: Grade 3 and Grade 5. In the suburban setting there were three participating classrooms: Grade 3, Grade 5 and Grade 8, and finally, in the rural setting there were two participating classrooms: Grades 3 and 8. The total number of educator participants was seven and the total number of student participants was 68: 34 female and 34 male. It was hoped that more educators would have participated, also increasing the number of potential students from which to draw participants, however, the school year in which this study was conducted was a particularly challenging one, with many educators feeling overwhelmed with obligations related to assessing and reporting student progress. The study proceeded with the available participants, and serves as a reminder of the challenges of conducting research in the milieu of the classroom.

In the first phase of this study, the unit of analysis was the educator, and the measure employed was, The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Moral Development and Education Questionnaire (Nucci, et al., 2005). This instrument was modified slightly and was piloted prior to this study commencing. This instrument was intended to collect data on educator knowledge of moral development, beliefs and sense of efficacy in

influencing student moral development and classroom management strategies, as well as some demographic data. An additional question on this survey asked if participants would be willing to participate in a follow-up semistructured interview with the researcher.

The second phase of this study involved students in the classroom of each participating educator. All students from the classes of each of the educator participants were invited to complete a separate questionnaire. This instrument had been used previously to measure the impact of the Child Development Project (see Battistich, 2003; Battistich, et al., 2000; Battistich, et al., 2004). This universal program attempts to mediate the needs of the individual with the need for positive social relationships by finding balance between intra- and interpersonal needs (Battistich, 2008) which is suggestive of social competence and therefore relevant to the current study. The student questionnaire focused on ethical sensitivity/judgment, motivation, conflict resolution, and perception of climate. It was modified with three additional vignette scenarios depicting social, moral, and mixed (both social and moral elements are present) domain situations to better reflect current investigational needs.

Four of the seven educator participants indicated a willingness to be interviewed for the third phase of this study (ideally there would have been at least one participant volunteer for each grade in each participating school as it was possible to have schools with multiple classes of the same grade). The schools randomly selected however did not have multiple classes of each target grade, and attempts to secure additional participants in other schools that also met the criteria (K-8 settings without a branded program in place) were not successful. The intent was to include participants with a range of responses from each of the three sections from the UIC questionnaire (knowledge of

moral development theory, sense of efficacy, classroom management strategies, and school demographics) to explore for differences in approaches used by these educators. Given the small sample size of educators, all who indicated interest were invited to an interview. Three interviews were conducted and, for reasons unknown to the researcher, the fourth volunteer failed to respond to further communication to set an interview time. The low teacher response rate to the original study invitation may be reflective of a challenging school year as the Ministry introduced a new report card fraught with difficulties that led many teachers to spend excessive amounts of time in preparation of report cards that year. Thus, perhaps due to the new professional demands and obligations, many teachers found that their time and schedule were challenged.

There were three main parts to this interview that paralleled the sections of the student questionnaire but utilized different questions. Each of the three parts constituted an overall focus: sense of classroom as community, social/interpersonal development, and social/moral development. The purpose of collecting these interview data was to explore, pedagogy, including educator sense of efficacy, and classroom practices in greater detail, and to confirm student self-reported behaviour.

Descriptive statistics were performed first to determine means, standard deviations, kurtosis, and skewedness for each section of the educator and student questionnaires respectively. For educators these data were further explored qualitatively by analyzing individual responses of each educator for every survey item, looking for any differences or trends in responses. For student participants inferential statistics were also conducted based on the results of the descriptive statistics obtained. Statistical results are reported separately for educators and students in Chapter Four.



This was a multivariable study interested in exploring for relations as well as differences based on two independent variables. For student data these included: grade and gender (setting was not considered as not all grades are represented in all three settings). Dependent variables included: influence, supportiveness, sense of school community, self-esteem, autonomy, social competence, conflict resolution, intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation, socio-moral beliefs, instrumental and relational motivation. For educator data independent variables included: school setting, years teaching, and grade taught. Dependent variables were moral development knowledge and sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to delivery of character education.

2 (gender) by 3 (grade) ANOVAs were performed to identify any interactions between gender and the three grades (Grade 3, 5, and 8). Finding none, multiple one-way ANOVA tests were employed to explore for differences between gender and grades on each of the scales (dependent variables) from the student questionnaire. 1 x 7 ANOVAs were also conducted to explore for differences by classroom. To explore for any relations among dependent variables, Pearson correlations were conducted for all the subscales of the student questionnaire. Qualitative data were obtained through educator interviews and student vignettes. Educator interviews were transcribed and coded for themes. In addition, the content of each interview was analyzed holistically to elaborate on individual educator pedagogy and practices. The data obtained from the student responses to the social vignettes were analyzed to explore for any differences between gender and grade in student beliefs and desires. These data were reported as frequencies/percentages and were analyzed further for emerging themes or trends in student responses. Qualitative findings were triangulated with quantitative findings to provide more thorough understanding of educator knowledge, beliefs, and practices, and the socio-moral reasoning of students. The

results of these analyses are reported first separately as quantitative and qualitative data in Chapter Four, and then in relation to each question under investigation as part of the discussion in Chapter Five.

An explanatory correlational design allows the researcher to investigate to what extent two (or more) variables covary (Creswell, 2008). Mixed-method designs and the use of triangulation of data have been identified as beneficial in the social sciences context (Creswell, 2009) and are especially valuable when the phenomenon under investigation is believed to be complex in nature (Cohen & Manion, 1981). For these reasons, this study followed a mixed-method design such that both quantitative and qualitative data and analyses were employed to explore the variables under investigation.

Transcribed interview material collected from educator participants during phase three were analyzed and compared for emerging themes. Educator interviews were coded according to emerging themes related to the following pedagogical elements: sense of classroom as community, development of social/interpersonal skills of students, development of socio-moral reasoning of students, and class culture/climate. Each interview was also analyzed holistically to further elaborate on each of the educators' pedagogy and practices. Student responses to the vignette questions from their questionnaire were coded to identify themes related to (a) beliefs/socio-moral reasoning, (coordinating or subordinating social or moral elements) and (b) desire/motivation for action (relational or instrumental goals). These themes were compared to the responses of the educators on their questionnaires and interviews. These data are anecdotal in nature.

Since there is limited research available which addresses first, relations between educator knowledge of moral development and beliefs and practices pertaining to character education, and second, relations between educator beliefs and practices and the

socio-moral reasoning and judgment of students, this study aims at first, raising awareness of this gap, and second, providing some empirical data at an exploratory level. This study provided examples of some strategies employed by educators in relation to their beliefs and understanding of moral development theory. Further, it highlighted the occurrence of relational or instrumental motivation, and justice and human welfare principle-based or social convention-based reasoning reported among public elementary school age children. This three-phase study focused on educators (phases 1 and 3) and elementary school age children (phase 2) from Grades 3, 5, and 8. Some differences between groups were evident and are described further in the results and discussion sections of this study. Further study into later adolescence may also be warranted to determine differences relative to maturational development.

This study used the social cognitive moral development theory, domain theory, as a lens for interpreting educator and student understanding of socio-moral reasoning (Nucci & Turiel, 2009), incorporated a social information processing model to consider motivation that leads to action (Crick & Dodge, 1994) and used a bioecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000) and relational theory (Lerner & Overton, 2008) to explore reciprocal relations between participants and their surroundings.

The findings of this study contribute to the moral development through character education literature first, by identifying some variation in knowledge of moral development and feelings of efficacy related to character education among educators. Second, it highlights differences in the socio-moral reasoning (*beliefs/desires*) and judgment of female and male students in different grades. Finally, it provides examples of strategies employed to create learning conditions conducive to positive socio-moral

development in concert with academic development. This, according to Leming (2008), is perhaps even more important than identifying “what works” in character education. Findings from this study were used to make recommendations on how the Ontario Ministry of Education might better support educators in their task of advancing socio-moral development of all children.

In conclusion, this three-phase mixed-method study explored elementary school educators’ knowledge of moral development, their beliefs and sense of efficacy pertaining to the delivery of character education, and the socio-moral reasoning and judgment of female and male students in different grades. The first phase focused on educators. Data were collected through the completion of a modified version of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Moral Development and Education Questionnaire (Nucci et al., 2005). The second phase explored student socio-moral reasoning, the beliefs and desires that govern their planned actions. Specifically student beliefs were explored for their use of moral principles of justice and human welfare and/or social conventions to govern judgment. Student desires were explored for the use of relational or instrumental motivation as their rationale for judgment. This phase employed a modified version of the Child Development Project student questionnaire (see Battistich, 2003; Battistich, et al., 2000; Battistich, et al., 2004). The final phase, semistructured educator interviews, provided greater insight into beliefs and classroom practices of educators as they support both the academic and the socio-moral development of their students.

### **Outline of Remaining Chapters**

Following this introduction, the second chapter provides an overview of the current and relevant research in the fields of character education, moral development theory, instructional/leadership pedagogy of educators, student reasoning and judgment. This study covers several disciplines, including educational pedagogy, philosophical and psychological approaches to moral development, and character education practices. It was necessary to provide the reader sufficient background understanding relative to the current study and yet not muddy the waters with irrelevant details. For this reason research relating to elementary school age children was the focus when these disciplines and the overlap that exists between them was explored.

Chapter Three outlines the specific research questions and hypotheses of the current mixed-method study, including the rationale for the design, and leads into the methodology. It is here that participants are described in conjunction with the measures employed and the procedures followed. This chapter describes some of the limitations of these measures as well as the statistical analyses applied. Chapter Four provides the results of this mixed-method study. It is divided into quantitative and qualitative sections incorporating results from educator and student participants. Part one pertains to quantitative data obtained through the student questionnaire and includes descriptive and inferential statistics (ANOVAs, and correlational analyses). The qualitative section incorporated the educator questionnaire descriptive statistics, and included an item analysis of the educator questionnaire, the student vignettes, and the educator interview analyses. The qualitative data reported are intended to clarify the quantitative data obtained in this investigation. Chapter Five is a discussion of the findings relative to the

questions and hypotheses from this investigation. The implications of these findings are also discussed, and recommendations for further investigation of identified areas of interest related to educator knowledge of moral development, their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education practices, and reported student socio-moral reasoning are presented. Chapter Six outlines the limitations of this study, including methodological issues identified, and offers final thoughts for consideration.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND PRESENT STUDY**

Research in the fields of moral development theory and character education practice has seen renewed interest in recent North American, British, and Australian history (McClellan, 1999; Nucci, 2009; Revell & Arthur, 2007; White & Warfa, 2011). However, investigation into educator knowledge and understanding of moral development theory relative to their character education beliefs and practices and the moral reasoning and judgment of students is absent from the literature. Educator practices have the potential to greatly impact student learning, whether that impact is in areas of academic subject matter or socio-moral development and as such is worthy of study.

Accepting that educator knowledge and beliefs influence their practices (Cochran-Smith & Fries 2005) and therefore the conditions for learning created in classrooms/schools, there may be educational significance in research that illuminates relations between what educators know about moral development and do with respect to character education, and student socio-moral reasoning and judgment. Such research may help with the identification of conditions that support student socio-moral development. According to R. Lerner and Overton (2008), it is essential to determine whether specific conditions, predicated on theory, are related to positive development outcomes. The potential for educators to impact student development generally, and the lack of research regarding relations between educator moral development knowledge, their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education, and student socio-moral reasoning within the context of Canadian elementary schools, provides the rationale for the present study.

The purpose of this chapter is to critically review the available literature (both theoretical and empirical) pertaining to socio-moral development of elementary school age children as well as the pedagogy and character education practices of educators for this population. Given that socio-moral development is such a vast and complex matter, aspects of psychological, philosophical, and pedagogical theories and practices will be discussed.

There are four main parts to this literature review intended to give the reader sufficient background information and understanding, and to provide support for the need for the current study. An examination of past and present psychological theories including further clarification of terminology relating to moral development will set the stage. Incorporated in this portion of the review are relevant philosophical underpinnings related to these psychological theories. A general overview of educational pedagogy follows and addresses the nature of pedagogic practices, including leadership style, in elementary classrooms as they influence classroom/school culture and climate. Next, studies related to character education practices in elementary schools (with an emphasis on North America, the UK, and Australia) are examined and include studies that measure educator knowledge of moral development. Finally, this review incorporates empirical studies relating to the behaviour of elementary school age children to explore the beliefs and desires/motivation that influence student judgment, including planned action. By better understanding the purposes served by student actions, it may become more apparent how to motivate for positive moral outcomes from judgment through to action.



### **Moral Development Theories: Childhood and Adolescence**

The study of moral development from a psychological perspective has broadened substantially in recent decades and incorporates not only a range of psychological theories (e.g., social and cognitive) but also links to other disciplines including philosophy, sociology, and biology (Killen & Smetana, 2006). Four main psychological frameworks of moral development theory, including their links to earlier philosophical theories, are the focus for this review. They include behaviorist theory, structural (cognitive) developmental stage theory, cognitive developmental theory and social cognitive theory. Each of these theoretical frameworks places more or less emphasis on matters of the individual, reasoning, and the impact of their surrounding environment. In addition to these rational approaches, some supporting literature of a nativist perspective is also provided, as the long-standing debate about whether moral development is nature or nurture continues (Haidt, 2012).

Two main philosophical theories have provided foundational concepts from which psychological theories have evolved. The behaviorist theoretical approach has been linked previously to the work of Aristotle (Leming, 2008), suggesting that virtuous behaviour was a matter of habit formation. Through repetitious experience, individuals learn to apply the attributes deemed by society to be good and desirable for life. Such attributes are obtained through the tutelage of the young by parents and teachers including mentors until such external guidance or direct instruction is no longer deemed necessary. Understood in this way, moral development would not be possible without the guidance of members of a community (Narvaez, 2006) including members of the schooling system. According to Narvaez (2006) such learning is not blind acceptance of

practice but rather the result of “guided reflection” (p. 719), suggesting that behaviour is not without relation to thought and therefore may not be as different from the philosophical position of Kant, the second philosophical theorist, who posited that moral development is related to the advancement of cognitive capacities to resolve issues encountered (Lapsley, 2008). Each of the following theories has roots in one of these philosophical approaches, creating a kind of antimony in understanding and explaining moral developmental processes.

The earliest psychological perspective of moral development theory to gain popularity was based in behaviorism, which began with the seminal work of Edward Thorndike and was based on Freud’s psychoanalytic theory (1930/1955). The premise for behaviorism is essentially that behaviour is learned based on stimulus-response pairings. Applied to moral development, children would be expected to learn morality as it were, by repetitious experiences with direct instruction by adult role models. Specific traits of morality would be reinforced until the transmission of values was complete (Wynne & Ryan, 1983). This implies a highly structured, rule-bound relationship between adult and child where children are rewarded for conforming to the rules and punished when they do not. The expectation would be for a child to behave according to the rule they had learned, regardless of the situation. Thus, a child who learned the rule for honesty should be able to articulate the appropriate or honest course of action (the rule) and then demonstrate honesty in their behaviour across all situations. In fact this has not been borne out in research where a “disconnect” between thought and action has been found, suggesting there may be other mediating variables at play. This “rule-based response” has

also been problematized as diminishing the ability of students to participate in democratic processes within a global society (Webster, 2010).

Former students of Edward Thorndike, Hartshorne and May (1928) conducted their seminal research to assist Thorndike in the development of test material to assess the moral aspects of an individual's character (as cited in Leming, 2008). Their findings have been referred to in much of the moral development literature to date (see Cunningham, 2005; Nucci, 2001; F. Power, Higgins, & Kohlberg, 1989 for example). Hartshorne and May found little consistency between responses on measures and observed performance. This finding led them to conclude that there are no such things as ideal traits that form the collective character of an individual and that application of any trait of good character was tied to the situation, not innate capacity. The argument that some aspects of character are innate has been supported elsewhere (see Haidt, 2012; Noddings, 2012), suggesting there is a biological basis for some behavioural tendencies, such as aggression serving a protective instinct. Rather than question which is stronger, learned behaviour or natural instincts, it may prove more fruitful to examine the relations between individuals and the context in which they exist, establishing where mutually beneficial (where the individual and the family, school, community benefit) influences occur and how these relations change both the system and the individual over time (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008). This becomes the work of developmental scientists interested in increasing the probability of positive outcomes for youth, the family, and the community at large (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008) and for this reason is relevant to the current investigation.

From the 8,000 student participants in the Hartshorne and May study they expected to find some who were virtuous most of the time and some who were not. In

fact they found virtually all 8,000 participants would lie, steal, cheat or act selfishly in certain circumstances. This led researchers Hartshorne and May to conclude that good character is “**situation specific**”; through experience, certain responses to situations yield better results than others and are therefore more likely to be replicated in novel but similar situations (Nucci, 2001).

Environmental influences, including people, symbols, and objects in the immediate environment are thought to influence human development based on a bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). The reciprocal and dynamic interaction between persons and their environment over time influence competence in intellectual, socio-moral, or physical domains and ultimately, ability to direct behavioural outcomes. According to R. Lerner and Overton (2008), examining alignment between context and individuals over time must occur in settings critical to human development, including the family, school, and community. Bronfenbrenner (2005) argues this is how to promote positive development. R. Lerner and Overton extend this thinking to specify that by isolating what features within what context, and at what point in development, results in what kind of outcomes, will increase opportunity to optimize positive outcomes.

Based on the findings of Hartshorne and May in conjunction with the bio-ecological framework for understanding human development, and the developmental systems and relations metatheory, an argument can be made for reasoning concomitant with environmental or contextual experiences. This approach becomes a greater focus with the work of cognitive developmental theorists such as Jean Piaget.

Jean Piaget (1932/1965) studied the socio-moral development of children, specifically the progression of judgment made by children through distinct and logical stages. Each stage builds upon the previous one, creating a cumulative effect on judgment, and represents growing autonomy in decision making. Piaget argued that while a child progresses developmentally in his or her character formation, it is in concert with their environment. They will not learn by being told by adults, and this advancement will not happen until they are developmentally ready and have the correct kinds of experiences from which to learn (Haidt, 2012). In large part these experiences were related to parent–child relations. Piaget went on to describe two types of parent-child relationships that would either promote or impede moral development. The first of the two relationships focuses more on obedience to authority and is considered heteronomous morality because behaviour is regulated by a sense of obedience rather than self-regulation (DeVries, 1997). This type of relation is one of coercion, using rules to dictate expected conduct, and resembles a pure behaviourist approach. The child in this case has no responsibility for reasoning about the moral course of action; he or she simply follows the rules given. This approach has potential problems, including the failure to develop the capacity to reason for oneself and the development of dependency on others. Piaget cautioned that this type of relation actually reinforces the need for behaviour to be governed by others rather than the children themselves and could lead to problems later when behavioral control is not as easily done (DeVries, 1997).

The second type of morality described by Piaget is more internally driven and is associated with a more cooperative parent–child relation. The child is autonomous in his or her decision making, relying on his or her personal convictions to guide his or her

thinking (DeVries, 1997). This ability is possible because the parent has provided ongoing developmentally appropriate opportunities for the child to learn to consider the needs and feelings of others as well as their own perspective when making choices. It was Piaget's position that through continuous interactions based on principles of cooperation, a child learns the importance of social reciprocity, the cornerstone for both moral and cognitive development. These interactions may be parent-child or child-child centred. The work of Piaget laid the foundation for further research and theoretical claims pertaining to moral development in children, including work by Lawrence Kohlberg, which attempts to delineate stages of moral development based on the principle of justice.

Lawrence Kohlberg, a seminal researcher in the field of moral development, studied morality from a structural (cognitive) developmental perspective during the 1960s and '70s. Kohlberg elaborated on the use of judgment in determining a course of action, as introduced by Piaget (1932/1965). Kohlberg's findings led him to conclude that children progress naturally through distinct stages of moral development where the level of judgment is advanced based on the ability to apply the principle of justice in the rationale for action. Kohlberg was interested in quantifying progress in moral reasoning by applying a structure (Haidt, 2012; Reimer, 1977). He identified three major levels, the preconventional, conventional, and postconventional, or principled level. Within these three levels, six stages of development were conceived: (a) heteronomous morality, (b) instrumental purpose and exchange, (c) mutual interpersonal expectations, relationships and conformity, (d) social system and conscience, (e) social contract or utility and individual rights, and finally (f) universal ethical principles (Power et al., 1989). Each of these stages represents unique structures of reasoning. The six stages of development

produce a cumulative positive effect on moral judgment as the individual progresses from early stage structured responses based on heteronomy and instrumental (or egocentric) gain to those reflecting greater autonomy and universal principles for the greater good, at the more advanced stages of reasoning. Movement through this continuum represents growth in the moral development of the individual and occurs naturally, according to Kohlberg, over a lifetime. However, he does acknowledge that not all adults demonstrate moral reasoning at the final stage (Power et al., 1989), which has been one of the challenges with Kohlberg's theory.

At the heart of each stage are understanding of justice, related motivation for making the right choice, and the level of freedom in making each judgment, which then leads to action. The earliest motivation is avoidance of punishment, which evolves into serving individual needs while recognizing that others have interests also. By stage three the individual has a need to be a good person in the opinion of others and that of the individual him/herself. The rationale then shifts to obligation to maintain the system and eventual recognition that the welfare of all people depends on established laws and duties. The final stage is the acceptance of universal moral principles and a desire to abide by them (Power et al., 1989). As Kohlberg (1971) discovered, individuals may choose the same action to dilemma situations, however the rationale for those choices follows different structured stages of reasoning. The more advanced stages incorporate a rationale based less on fear of punishment and more on the ability to prioritize needs according to what is just (Reimer, 1977). The unifying premise of the Kohlberg model for moral development is an understanding of "justice" not as a distinct value but as an evolving process, which underlies an individual's capacity for moral judgment (Power et

al., 1989). The individual's conceptualization of fairness evolves through each of the six stages and guides choices between right and wrong.

Like Piaget, Kohlberg found that to develop moral reasoning that would support their judgment, children needed to gain experiences within their environment and the people in it. In fact, one of Kohlberg's noted findings, according to Haidt (2012), was that the most morally developed youth were the ones who had opportunity to understand alternative points of view through role-taking experiences in their natural environment. Haidt further identified hierarchical relationships such as those commonly found between adults and children impede role-taking, since a child may struggle to put him/herself in the place of an adult; however, egalitarian relations, such as the relationships between peers, invite such role-taking opportunities and may actually promote more advanced reasoning. Based on the work of Piaget and Kohlberg and the assumption that education is often considered an extension of parenting, it is possible that similar relations and outcomes would be observed in classroom environments between educators and students and even further, as suggested by Haidt, as students interact with their school community. Thus the present study took place within school settings and considered specifically the interactions among educators and students within these learning communities.

Promotion of moral judgment is not simply learning a set of socially accepted behaviours or rules; it is a structural capacity and, once it is developed, although performance is situationally varied, the capacity resides *within* the individual to apply (Power et al., 1989). This is a distinguishing feature from the earlier behaviourism approach to moral development that essentially described behaviour as being controlled by factors external to the individual, and an extension of the earlier work of Jean Piaget.



It is also among the challenges faced by Kohlberg's theory, which include: inconsistency of moral stage expression within individuals across different situations (Carpendale & Krebs, 1992), the lack of association between reasoning and action relating to Kohlberg's stages (Blasi, 1980; Colby & Damon, 1992), instability of stages (Nucci & Turiel, 1978), and the ability of young children (e.g., 4 years of age) to differentiate moral matters from social convention (Nucci & Turiel, 1978; Smetana, 1981).

From the preceding psychological frameworks, disconnect between thought and action, the ability of young children to reason at a moral stage, and the instability of stages required further inquiry and explanation. A fourth psychological theory, known as social cognitive domain theory, offers a different proposition with the intention of addressing these issues (Nucci & Turiel, 2009). Of note is the shift away from stages or advancing autonomy to the identification of distinct domains. Unlike Kohlberg's theory, social conventions are not gradually replaced by more universal principles of morality; instead, these elements coexist and can be activated at any time (Nucci, 2006; Turiel, 1974). This approach makes a distinction between three possible domains in which an individual operates: moral universal, social convention, and personal, and argues that failure to act in ways consistent with knowledge/reasoning may in fact be due to an inability to prioritize conflicting domains. Ideally, an individual is able to shift the weight given to each of the three domains to reflect the circumstances of the situation, including differences in cultural norms (Turiel et al., 1991) however, failure to weight elements in the situation may help explain actions taken by an individual which do not match reasoning abilities.

Social domain theory began as a study into apparent directionality difficulties with Kohlberg's stage theory. When Kohlberg discovered some older adolescents and young adults reverting back to earlier preconventional stages of reasoning, there was great concern as this progression in reverse is contradictory to principles of structural stage theory (Nucci, 2008) which claims that once established, the stages are stable and do not allow for regression. In examining the reasoning and judgments exercised by these young adults in Kohlberg's dilemmas, Turiel (1974) determined that there were in fact interactions between social conventions and concepts of fairness and human well-being which may account for the apparent regression. Perhaps more important, Turiel found that children, regardless of age, judged moral transgressions differently from social convention transgressions. Where social transgressions were judged based on the presence or absence of a rule to govern such behaviour (e.g., forms of address, running in school halls), moral transgressions (e.g., hitting a peer) were judged on the impact these decisions had upon the welfare of others (Nucci, 2008). This discovery is a contradiction to the earlier work of Kohlberg that claimed the young were not capable of moral reasoning until cognitive levels were more advanced and autonomous.

The third domain to be distinguished in social domain theory is that of personal preference. According to Nucci (2008) this element is critical to the establishment of autonomy and individual identity; as well, it is necessary to maintain boundaries between self and others. Parents typically communicate items for personal choice with children from very young ages (e.g., "What would you like to wear today?") as a means for developing an early sense of autonomy and decision making ability. Parents will typically

negotiate these types of items with children where such latitude is not usually exercised when the matter is a convention or moral issue (Nucci, 2008).

Within each of the three domains there is development that follows a characteristic pattern. Changes to the moral domain are concerned with underlying conceptions of human welfare and justice (Damon, 1977; Nucci & Turiel, 2009). Changes to the social convention realm are based on understanding of social systems and organization (Turiel, 1983) and with a greater sense of self-identity for the personal realm (Nucci, 1996). With maturation, children are believed to be better able to coordinate each of the elements in increasingly complex situations. For example, in complex multidomain situations the child is required to subordinate or coordinate the domains based on principles of justice and fairness or welfare of others. This coordination proves a challenge for younger children who may not yet have the conceptual understanding that what is fair forms the basis for a reciprocal relationship (Nucci, 2008). According to Damon (1977), this is particularly true when there are multiple people whose needs require consideration. This understanding of reciprocity is later replaced with a more advanced understanding of the principles of equity and equality (Damon, 1977) such that a child is able to reason that what is fair is not necessarily the same for everyone. The present study focused on how female and male students from elementary grades (Grade 3, 5, and 8), within different school settings (urban, suburban, and rural), completed single and mixed domain problems (e.g., what to do when someone they know from their school drops \$10.00, and what to do when an argument breaks out over a goal during a soccer game at school).

Social cognitive domain theory is not without its challenges. Haidt (2012), exploring non-Western cultures, has problematized the distinction between social conventions and moral principles with findings that suggest moral reasoning extends beyond applying principles of harm or justice and can in fact include matters that might previously be thought of as conventions based on domain theory, such as rules around food, clothing, or sex. Haidt (2012), in his efforts to define matters of moral concern relative to matters of convention, suggests morality “involves tension *within* the group linked to competition *between* different groups” (p. 33). His findings led him to suggest that more than self-constructed understanding of harm or fairness must be involved in moral development. For example, according to Cushman, Young, and Hauser (2006), and Green and Haidt (2002), intuition rather than conscious reasoning may be responsible for judgments made. Perhaps an innate element in conjunction with social learning within key contexts, an interaction between individuals and their environment which influences both the individual cognitively and the environment over time are at play.

According to Nucci and Turiel (2009), reasoning about human welfare presents the greatest challenges as it proves to be quite diverse, following a more U-shaped pattern than understanding of justice. This pattern means that where an indirect form of harm is concerned for the younger child (e.g., age 7 or 8) and the older adolescent (e.g., age 16 or 17), the course of action is clear. In a situation where money has been dropped for example, and the owner is unaware, such individuals are clear in their reasoning about the need to return the money, where a 13-year-old is not as clear in his or her reasoning (Nucci, 2008). The exception to this, based on Nucci and Turiel (2009), occurs when the individual who has unknowingly dropped the money is handicapped in some way. In

these instances all the participants were as likely to return the money. This finding and the recent assertions by Haidt (2012) represent a growing appreciation of the complexity of variables encountered and requiring consideration when discussing moral development.

Similar patterns of development exist in the advancement of social convention understandings and can be identified at one of seven different levels (Turiel, 1983). For example, typically a 10-year-old will describe the reason for rules in school as necessary to maintain order and that those responsible for everyone's safety generally make up the rules to be followed (Nucci, 2008). This perspective shifts in adolescence to one of arbitrariness, a sense that rules are essentially representative of the whims of authority (Nucci, 2008). Finally the older adolescent and young adult transition into a more global perspective, recognizing that such conventions of practice are important to social system structure (Nucci, 2008). According to Gershkoff and Thelen, (2004), such U-shaped patterns as those identified in both the moral and social domains are typical of other developmental areas including language, cognition, and physical ability, and mark growing competence with more complex matters.

From the perspective of social cognitive domain theorists, the understanding of moral development is not limited to moral reasoning and judgment but rather needs to incorporate simultaneous relation with social conventions and personal preferences (Nucci, 2001). According to Nucci and Turiel (2009b) interrelations between personal prerogative and the needs of others are balanced by fair reciprocity. For these reasons, the current investigation attempts to explore moral development within the context of elementary school classrooms/schools, where social situations involving moral principles,

social conventions to maintain order, and personal prerogatives are all expected to be part of the lived reality of students' and educators' days.

The simultaneous processing of social, moral, and personal domains also assists in the appreciation of the difficulties with the Kohlberg dilemmas and the apparent regression of adolescents to earlier stages of reasoning, which troubled this theory of moral development. These dilemmas were structured so as to pit issues of justice or welfare against social standards, and so it is perhaps less surprising that the adolescents in these studies appeared to regress to an earlier stage of reasoning (Nucci, 2008). Rather, they were consolidating their ability to coordinate increasingly complex situations, including coordinating issues of convention, which sometimes bump up against personal preferences. This understanding has implications for character education related practices of educators. Where the distinction is made between social convention and morality, with an awareness of personal preferences, in educator modeling of problem solving and expectations of students, this understanding among students may be reinforced and applied more reliably. Conversely, where both conventions and morality are assigned rules to be followed without making a distinction, students may have difficulty coordinating or prioritizing these domains in novel situations.

The value ascribed to understanding fairness as a reciprocal relationship in social cognitive domain theory and the need to treat matters of convention and morality differently suggest that both understanding why certain expectations exist and developing and valuing relations with others in their community may benefit student socio-moral reasoning and judgment making. In a report to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Delors (1998) recommended four pillars become the

framework for education: learning to know, learning to do, learning to live with others, and learning to be. Learning to live with others, or to maintain relationships, has been identified elsewhere as integral to well-being, offering protective value against possible psychopathologies, such as depression, and increasing success of a group (Seligman, 2011). Delors states that to activate the third pillar specifically, students must have an appreciation of *why*, and to simply provide them with this pillar and expect passive acceptance is counterproductive to developing strong commitment to a belief; they must engage with this assertion to fully understand and appreciate it. Creating conditions where kindness, self-sacrifice and compassion are mirrored within all members will assist in developing capacity to understand the thinking and feeling of others (Seligman, 2011), and with this understanding will come an increased ability to cooperate for common goals. How such understanding is nurtured is an aspect of pedagogy and is explored next.

### **Educational Pedagogy: Establishing Classroom Culture**

The term pedagogy has in some of its earliest forms referred to study of not only how the mind develops but also to aligning the best methods of instruction to mental development (Larsen, 2002). In the past 100 years, educational pedagogy has evolved, and with this evolution has come changes in practices for educators in classrooms. The focus for this brief overview of changes to educational pedagogy is primarily to assist the reader in understanding how educator pedagogy, including leadership style, impacts the culture and climate of a learning environment and, by extension, student experiences/learning that are fundamental to the current investigation. As the world changes, so too must the practices in our schools. The 21<sup>st</sup> century marks a time of significant change in world culture, making it critically important that education, not only the what, but the how, prepare our students for what lies ahead in a highly complex global society.

Based on work by, C. Power and Higgins-D'Alessandro (2008) school culture is a critical component to be explored when examining practices related to student moral development. A school environment can be thought of as incorporating culture, the underlying values and ideology (Anderson, 1982; Creemers & Reezigt, 1999) with climate, the practices and lived experiences of these values (Creemers & Reezigt, 1999). School/classroom culture has the potential to help students frame their thinking in terms of collective (we believe) rather than individual (I believe) conscience (C. Power & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2008; Higgins-D'Alessandro & Sath, 1997).

According to Cochran-Smith and Fries (2005), the knowledge of the teacher frames his or her belief structures and serves as a filter for educational practices, including decisions about the learning environment and strategies to maintain this space. Educators can, through the intentional creation of a learning environment, mediate student thinking and learning (Solomon et al., 2000). According to Rabin and Smith (2013), educators influence moral growth through their relationships. These relationships are formed as an aspect of the classroom/school environment.

Educational practices have been directed at developing both intellectual and moral capacities (Larsen, 2002), although it tends to be the intellectual capacities that are measured and monitored in schools more so than moral capacities. Despite the potential for impact, relatively few empirical studies exist which examine the influence of the classroom environment on areas other than academic development (Baker, Clark, Crowl, & Carlson, 2009). Viewing socio-moral reasoning, an aspect of human development, from the perspective of bio-ecological (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) and systems and relational metatheory (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008) would suggest such evaluation is



essential for programs and policies intended to promote positive human development. The current study explored grade (age) and gender-related differences among students' beliefs and motivation for action, as aspects of their socio-moral reasoning.

The leadership style of educators in the learning environment can be likened to styles of parenting and include permissive, authoritarian, and authoritative approaches (Baumrind, 1991) and, similar to parenting styles, have strengths and weaknesses for student learners, including their sense of autonomy which has previously been identified as important in moral development (see Piaget 1932/1965 for example). Are students viewed as passive receivers of knowledge, or active knowledge co-creators or designers? To what extent is power shared in the classroom between educators and students? How these questions are answered sheds light on the pedagogy of educators. Of interest in this current review is the amount of control exercised in the establishment and maintenance of the learning environment.

The current emphasis in education in Ontario is on the learning process rather than facts or content for students and educators alike, and with this significant shift in pedagogy have come expectations of great change in educational practice. Educators are learning the value of inquiry as a form of professional development and method for supporting student learning (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009). With the shift of attention to learning as a process and actively engaging the learner in this process means educators cannot approach curriculum without knowing and valuing their students. This denotes a need for relationships to be formed and maintained among students and between students and their educators.

Educators are more often facilitators and observers than lecturers, perhaps introducing a concept or problem and then observing students as they investigate ways to solve the problem or make sense of a concept or issue. Educators ask questions to help students clarify or activate their thinking and provide opportunities for students to share their thinking with others. This requires a supportive learning environment where risk taking is safe. Creating such a learning environment requires focused attention and purposeful action from the educator and is believed to lead to strong student self-efficacy (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2001). The educator will not be successful in creating such learning conditions without understanding why and how to best engage the learners in their classroom including methods for developing positive relations within the classroom/school context.

As students leave school today and into the future, they are anticipated to need a range of skills to meet the demands of a diverse global society. Among these projected skills are the ability to reflect on learning and strategies employed to meet with the greatest success as well as the ability to resolve problems and communicate with others effectively. Due in part to the increasing access to information through technological advances, there is also an expectation that students will develop literacy levels that extend beyond the realm of reading and writing for the purposes of communication. To be literate includes a growing need for critical and moral literacy. How these skills are developed and the relative importance they are given may depend in part on conditions outside the classroom/school environment as well as the values and skills of the educators and their interpretation of their educative purpose.

Some theorists emphasize the importance of “de-centering power” in the classroom (Giroux & McLaren, 1991), thereby enabling students to develop their capacity to recognize and consider critically social injustice and support their struggle to break free (R. Simon, 1992). Such educators support an “authoritative” approach to classroom structure. This approach is not necessarily one that all educators embrace, even with the current mandates for student learning which place greater emphasis on reflective practices, critical literacy, and communication skills. In fact some would argue that it is counterproductive to their task of educating students because it ignores the realities beyond the academic achievement mandate. Such educators may rely more heavily on “authoritarian” approaches to equip students and themselves with survival skills in challenging circumstances—including maintaining control for greater safety.

Hayward (1999), in a study of two very different fourth grade classrooms, one in a poverty stricken urban area and the other an affluent suburban area of the United States, discovered the establishment of culture and student experiences were impacted by the perception of educators of their priorities, their interpretation of conditions external to the classroom environment (e.g., poverty, crime rates, drug use, etc.) as well as their knowledge of the teaching/learning process. Where educators perceive the priorities beyond the academic mandate are beyond their control (such as poverty and crime rates), the approach to classroom environment establishment and maintenance is one of survival, and takes on a more authoritarian tone (Hayward, 1999). Community factors such as poverty and crime rates, together with educator skills, values, and experiences, could be expected to influence the practices educators apply in classrooms and the subsequent experiences and learning of students. The current investigation incorporated classrooms

from three different demographic areas of a large public board of education in Ontario, Canada to explore for differences in student socio-moral reasoning relative to the knowledge of moral development and sense of efficacy and beliefs of the educators in these classrooms.

Where educators perceive themselves as maintaining control of knowledge, greater emphasis is placed on teaching than the learning process. In this instance teaching is perceived to be an active process and learning more passive; educational pedagogy takes on a transmission type approach, with the goal of imparting knowledge held (or accessed) by the educator, and viewed as pertinent, to the student. The instructional strategies of such an approach might include practices such as direct lecturing, with recitation and memorization as the goals for the pupil (Larsen, 2002).

In general terms, the student in a transmission type model classroom/school is to be molded intellectually and morally by the adults in charge. Knowledge deemed of value is to be imparted to the next generation (Voparil, 2008), and rules established by the educator(s) are to be followed without thought or question. In other words, the content or the curriculum and achievement of students, as measured by the educator, are given greater priority over the individual, their interests, needs, and experiences (social and academic) or those of the entire group. Such an approach may be fueled by mandates on student achievement and educator accountability and inadvertently overlook the priority of learning and well-being. Educators who do not value or know how to create a safe and caring classroom environment suitable for learning could be expected to default to extrinsic control measures to obtain student compliance with educator expectations (Bondy, Ross, Galligane, & Hambacher, 2007). Attempting to incorporate educators

with a range in years of experience, working in different demographic areas, and teaching different grades was intended to explore the possibility that differences in educator knowledge of moral development, their sense of efficacy and beliefs regarding character education, as evidenced in their pedagogy, would exist.

Examined from the perspective of Dewey's educational philosophy, an authoritarian approach will fail to bring about real learning because the student is not engaged as an active participant in the learning process. This position would also be expected from theorists Piaget, Kohlberg, Nucci, and Turiel based on their study of moral development. Dewey (1986) uses the term "warranted assertibility" (p. 16) to describe a process of coming to know in place of the term "knowledge", to emphasize the value in understanding *why*, not just what. This approach is consistent with the recent focus on inquiry in education and emphasizes the process of learning, not an end product or answer. This shift is still very much evolving, as the continued emphasis on student achievement may present to some as a conflicting priority with the learning process.

An educational pedagogy which values students in the learning process and actively engages students in the academic process, as well as the establishment of the classroom/school culture, differs from authoritarian pedagogy in a number of respects and may be described as an authoritative pedagogy. Authoritative pedagogy implies greater power balance between teacher and student and can be described as high on dimensions of demandingness (firm control, autonomy, and expectations) and responsiveness (caring relations, access to resources, and adaptation to needs). Where authoritarian pedagogy is high on demandingness but low on responsiveness, a

permissive pedagogy is low on demandingness and high on responsiveness (Walker, 2008). Each approach has implications for intellectual and social development.

According to Baker et al. (2009), authoritative classrooms, environments characterized by caring relationships, high expectations, a warm and responsive structure that develops student autonomy and self-regulation skills, yield more positive outcomes in school satisfaction, academic competence, and classroom adjustment. This approach appears to align more closely with the conditions for learning outlined by the Ontario Ministry of Education. According to the Ontario Ministry of Education, teachers need to

create learning contexts that allow students to make decisions about their learning processes and about how they will demonstrate their learning.

They encourage collaborative learning and create intellectual spaces for students to engage in rich talk about their thinking and learning. They create a classroom ethos that fosters respect for others' ideas and opinions and encourages risk-taking. (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 4).

This model would be expected to support egalitarian relations between peers and promote opportunities for perspective and role-taking, aspects of student learning believed to be key in developing reasoning skills (Haidt, 2012; Nucci 2009). Despite the mandate by the Ontario Ministry of Education, variation in practice across the province (and beyond) should be expected.

Darling and Steinberg (1993) found the nature of classroom practices employed in Grade 6 classrooms influenced the receptiveness of the students to material being covered as well as socialization efforts, making some more responsive than others. Even when the goals are consistent, fostering personal responsibility for example, practices differ depending on the leadership pedagogy employed by the educator. Where an educator

practicing authoritative pedagogy explains the rationale for a specific task or requirement, another exercising authoritarian pedagogy relies on punishment/consequences to garner compliance (Hayward, 1999; Walker, 2008).

Similarly, for instructional goals, the authoritarian educator demands that students work hard for them, demonstrating their commitment to learning; the authoritative educator tries to illustrate the relevance of what is being learned and will coach students experiencing difficulty. They support students to view themselves as knowledgeable individuals who should be confident questioning intellectual authority rather than simply accepting all they read/hear as truth (Hayward, 1999). Expectations alone are insufficient to support student development; responsiveness is equally important and, dependent upon the relative weight each of these dimensions is given, educator leadership style is changed and outcomes for students affected. Related to leadership style, or the how of educational practices, is educator perspective of what is important for students to learn and rounds out educational pedagogy.

According to Brooks and Normore (2010), educators need to expand their view of educational pedagogy to include a greater understanding of social change at the crossroads of local and global realities present and future. Education, if it is to be relevant and of value, must maintain connections with the world it serves (Marx, 2006), including looking ahead to the future trends that are on the horizon. Many of these future trends represent firsts in world history, including the outnumbering of the young by older generations (in developed countries), the growing speed with which information is communicated, and advances in scientific discoveries, calling for greater ethics in decision making, to name only a few (Marx, 2006). Future trends as well as greater understanding of

the complexity of learning through advances in neurodevelopmental psychology and changing political views have resulted in a movement to transform the face of education.

Voparil (2008), using the work of John Dewey, advocates for educational reform which places greater emphasis on responding to differences in a way that advances moral and social responsibility, as well as intellectual understanding, to serve the increasingly diverse needs of learners, and by extension, society. Dewey offers a view of pedagogy that places greater emphasis on understanding of self, the world around self, and the ability to think critically. To accomplish this end requires a transformation of instructional practice and learning conditions from more traditional didactic teaching to more inquiry and collaborative learning. Of note are the conditions needed for democratic principles to flourish, including the nourishment of relationships to support the spirit of cooperation necessary for collaborative learning. The current investigation was interested in exploring the nature of student motivation, relational and/or instrumental, in the judgments made by students for any differences by grade or gender.

From an instructional practice perspective, for democratic principles to blossom, the emphasis must be shifted from an end product (i.e., factual knowledge) in favour of greater emphasis on the process (i.e., inquiry). In truly democratic circumstances all members have rights, freedoms, and responsibilities, which in a classroom are characterized by the presence of conversation, collaboration, opportunities for constructive conflict and compromise, active social construction of knowledge, and shared decision-making (O'Brien, 2002). While this is the current push in education today in Canada and beyond, it is not necessarily the lived reality in classrooms in all public schools in Ontario. Some educators may not be comfortable with such practices because they are not reflective of their experiences as students, others may perceive such



an approach as impossible given conditions external to the classroom, such as high poverty and crime rates which may threaten safety or security inside the school (Hayward, 1999). Thus, there may be a tendency to hold on to earlier instructional and classroom management practices evident in the participating classrooms.

Despite growing insight and understanding into the realm of moral development, educator practices for moral education have not necessarily progressed. Nucci and Turiel (2009) offer two reasons for this apparent lack of progress, first that psychological research on children's moral development is prematurely translated into educator practices, and second that the complexities of the interactions between moral development and the context in which it occurs is underestimated greatly. A third reason may be the apparent lack of professional learning opportunities for educators, intended to advance their knowledge and skill in the realm of socio-moral development of students. Moral development has been associated with character education practices past and present (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005). These practices are the next area of focus in this review.

### **Character Education: Elementary School Context**

Character education, defined as “explicit delivery of mediated learning experiences designed to promote pro-social attitudes and behavior (i.e., pro-sociality) that support the development of social competence and a cooperative disposition” (White & Warfa, 2011), has its roots in early philosophies of Aristotle and Plato and has existed in one form or another, named or unnamed, for centuries. Despite the needs of society and the growing knowledge of moral development theory, there have been limited changes to character education practices in recent history. It appears the antimony that has separated

theories of moral development persist in the practices advocated in character development approaches. According to Cunningham (2005), the form of character education adopted at a systemic level (e.g., at a Ministry of Education or school board level) appears to be closely linked with the current identity of society and becomes particularly important if society is experiencing crisis in that identity. For example, where society identifies increasing problems with inappropriate behaviour in schools, efforts to regain control, and increase cohesion might be expected to follow (White & Warfa, 2011).

Integrated in character are the “complex psychological characteristics that enable an individual to act as a moral agent” (p.73) according to Berkowitz and Bier (2004) and for the purposes of this investigation are characterized as beliefs and desires. While more is understood of “character as a construct,” with the advancement of different theoretical frameworks and the links to prevailing psychological literature, educator practices may not be substantially changed. For example, according to Arthur (2005), without evidence-based direction educators tend to reduce “character education” teaching to a behaviouristic approach, promoting, rewarding, and punishing behavioural outcomes. In much the same way, as Dewey recommends students understand the *why* of what they are learning, and be actively engaged in this learning process, so too must educators. Without understanding and an appreciation of the rationale or theory behind a practice, educators will likely continue to rely upon that which is most comfortable or familiar (the behaviouristic approach) rather than adopt new practices—even if the “new approaches” are research-supported best practices. The current investigation was concerned with exploring the knowledge of moral development among educators and their sense of

efficacy and beliefs regarding character education for differences related to student socio-moral reasoning.

The moral development discourse among researchers has been furthered by continuing study, and yet the practices of educators do not necessarily reflect this growing understanding (Arthur, 2005; Schuitema et al., 2008). Changes to the form and function of character education in the past century will be outlined briefly here (for more in depth literature reviews on character education history, see Leming, 2008; Shumaker & Heckel, 2007; Wren, 2008) and will illustrate that even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century some remnants of character education in its earliest forms remain in the choices of educators. Just as instructional practices are found to be the products of educator knowledge and beliefs, the same might be said of their practices related to character education and should be expected to influence student outcomes.

Given this supposition, classroom practices are expected to align with underlying educator pedagogy and will therefore differ by individual educator to some extent. The approach educators subscribe to (regardless of time in history) may be associated with immediate social circumstances as well as the beliefs and experiences of the educators themselves. For example, in areas of high crime and poverty, educators may rely on highly structured rule-bound practices to maintain control (Hayward, 1999) out of a perceived need for safety. These controlling practices may be most closely aligned with a traditional character education approach and authoritarian educator pedagogy.

In the 1920s, character was argued to be the sum of an individual's traits. This position was reflective of the predominantly behaviorist psychological theories of the time, influenced by the seminal work of Edward Thorndike. However, the difficulty of

identifying which traits should become the focus of instruction and how best to deliver this instruction soon developed. Critics argued against this approach because, in part, it failed to acknowledge the role of reason, and it was thought measurement of moral development in children would be too difficult (Cunningham, 2005). It may also be that it simply was considered secondary to the academic priority and not given its due in the educational field, as it failed to be part of the syllabus of preservice programs, nor was it a focus of in-service opportunities, (Milson, 2003; Nucci et al., 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007) for practicing educators.

The result of this debate was the evolution of two primary positions on character that continue to be seen in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: a trait based position, generally preferred by educators, and a response-based position, generally preferred by psychologists. The trait based approach tends to align more closely with the teachings of Aristotle, who argued that it was through the practicing of “good” choices that youth became good people (Arthur, 2008) and, again, is considered behaviorist in nature. As it was believed that identified traits could be integrated into the personality of an individual through ongoing practice to ultimately create desirable citizens, educators were responsible for creating exposure to desired experiences through the inculcation of preferred school environment norms. This approach suggests conformity was the intended outcome and is consistent with an industrial model, which saw schools as agents of uniform socialization.

In contrast, the response-based approach held that character was more likely a collection of responses to various situations, dependent on the inherent capacity of the individual to reason (Cunningham, 2005) and is linked more closely to the teachings of Plato. Plato argued that moral education was more about thinking skills than habit

formation (Arthur, 2008). The trait-based approach differed from the reasoned approach with respect to the role of cognition and instructional methods. Where the trait-based approach tended to be more direct instruction supported with rules to be memorized and followed with rewards and punishments, the response-based approach required more indirect guidance from educators, with value placed on student knowledge and greater student autonomy in decision-making. The reasoned approach in 2013 might be best aligned with the authoritative educator embracing inquiry as a learning process.

Researchers striving to apply quantitative measures to character education created the Character Education Inquiry (Cunningham, 2005). This early attempt to measure the nature of character with the intent of determining best practice for instruction resulted in the seminal research by Hartshorne and May. Their findings, discussed earlier in this chapter, indicated that the application of specific traits was in fact situation specific, and therefore teaching desired traits through rewards and punishments would not yield improved moral development among school age children. Character education as an entity in North American schools was beginning its transformation (McClellan, 1999) but for a time faded into the background of educational priorities, behind the academic agenda.

There was another brief rise in character education activity, perhaps not surprisingly, on the heels of World War II. In 1945 schools were again seen as agents of socialization and therefore ideal bodies to develop character in children. Having just come through the horrors of humanity in WWII, North American schools were instructed to promote American, largely White Anglo-Saxon, values. The competitive capitalism of the day was underscored by values of a good education and hard work (Kagan, 2007)

where persevering with work would ultimately be rewarded with wealth/accomplishment for the individual. The most prevalent approach used at this time again resembled the direct instruction, trait-based, traditional models of character education aimed at creating good habits of mind and heart.

The international race into space in the late '50s saw character education once again take a back seat to academic achievement in North American public education. The values of North American society were being shaped by the reality that there was global competition for scientific predominance as well as a growing sense of individualism and the attainment of the *American Dream*. In the 1960s and into the 1970s, the appearance of character education continued its shift. Increased personal freedom, growing cultural diversity, and emphasis on individualism rampant in society ended the traditional character education movement (Shumaker & Heckel, 2007).

What replaced traditional character education was “values clarification” most commonly associated with Sidney Simon. This model espoused the facilitation of students finding their own way in what they believed and what was important to them, but did not advocate any particular moral values. Simon (1971) made the argument that it was not the job of educators to decide which values students should hold but rather facilitate students in finding their own way. Paramount in this approach was promotion of learner self esteem (B. Lerner, 2006). This approach again appears to align with the cultural values of North Americans of the time, many of whom had protested against racial injustices and the war in Vietnam. Signaling a culture that would not be led, but would stand up against what they believed was unjust, particularly where their rights and freedoms were at risk.

Meanwhile, Kohlberg was conducting his research in moral development. His findings led him to conclude that people progress naturally through six distinct stages of moral development when given the right experiences, although not all will follow this progression. To some extent progression from one stage to the next was believed to be dependent on the interaction of the individual with his or her environment and his or her motivation to act, leading Kohlberg to argue that teachers could facilitate movement to the next stage with developmentally appropriate tasks within a community based on principles of justice (F. Power et al., 1989). Such a community was created through discussion of practical issues of relevance to the individual and the school as a social body (F. Power et al., 1989). In this way, the teacher is viewed as facilitator, charged with responsibility for advancing the thinking and judging processes of children, and also for modeling moral behaviour as a member of what Kohlberg calls the “just community” (Chazan, 1985). Others have since argued that cognitive and moral development and the environment in which learning occurs cannot and should not be viewed as separate but rather interrelated entities (see Damon, 2004; LePage, Darling-Hammond, & Akar, 2005; Noddings 2006 for examples), a view supported in the current study.

Kohlberg argued the need to teach students justice and fairness by utilizing real, unjust scenarios (dilemmas) to which they could relate, in an environment where everyone was treated and acted justly (just communities). These scenarios were intended to call into question what the student believed to be just and fair. The aim was to create a situation where the students must adjust their current thinking to account for the new information. This process was intended to provide the students with practical experience in decision-making, a skill that embodied the principles of justice and fairness at its core

by taking on different roles/perspectives. This practice of taking on roles and perspectives has also been supported in more recent literature as necessary for developing reasoning skills (see Haidt, 2012 for example). Kohlberg was careful to point out that such an environment requires thoughtful construction. It cannot be a superficial endeavor, where students perceive the, “real decisions” are made by teachers (F. Power et al., 1989). Kohlberg argued that entire school communities could be developed that would support this methodology.

This approach to how moral thinking and behaviour could be developed did not flourish in many North American schools. At least one possible explanation for why these ideas did not take shape in schools came from Noddings (2002) in support of earlier work by Gilligan (1982). Noddings argued that Kohlberg missed the mark in his research because all his subjects were male and therefore ignored the feminine component. Noddings argued that where boys tended to focus on principles of justice in their decision-making, girls were more interested and motivated by caring relationships. To base character education only on principles of justice would negate values of a sizeable portion of the population. The current investigation was concerned with female and male socio-moral reasoning.

Perhaps another reason why this approach did not become the norm has more to do with the departure from usual practice among educators and the lack of professional development opportunities afforded educators to increase their understanding of moral development. To establish a community where every member has a voice that is valued, such that decision-making is a shared responsibility, would mean relinquishing some of the power and control traditionally attributed to the adults in schools. It would also likely



require a reshaping of school organizations, a significant reform which may have been seen as too great a task for the anticipated benefits, particularly where there did not appear to be support for educators in the role. Frankly, it may have been viewed as just too difficult a task. This structural moral development theory did translate into instructional programs within a few schools but did not translate into widespread application. It has however provided much foundation for further investigation by researchers.

Instead of stages, Turiel (1989, 2002) and Nucci (1997, 2001), following a social cognitive framework, argued that there are in fact three distinct domains within which different situations fall: social convention, moral universal, and personal domains. These domains can exist in isolation but can also overlap. A challenge, according to Nucci, is in reconciling any conflicting beliefs to determine action for a situation. This course of action does not always align with adult expectations (Nucci & Turiel, 2009). Based on suppositions made by Haidt (2012) and work by Noddings (2012), further challenges, when considering moral thinking and subsequent actions, might include understanding the role of instinctual capacities (e.g., aggressive and protective tendencies) in concert with social learning.

With the 1990s came another character education movement in public education within North America. A similar movement has been noted in both the United Kingdom and Australia. Nucci (2006) claims character education was brought to the surface again, not by moral decay of society but the normal cyclical shifting of society as it experiences periods of “rapid social change” (p. 659). A combination of continued cultural diversity through high immigration rates, profound incidences of school violence, and renewed interest in neo-conservative values may potentially be considered social catalysts for this recent interest.

Growing cultural diversity and increased technological communication, to name only two areas experiencing change, have impacted values. Educators during this period were faced with the challenge of advancing moral literacy levels of students within a context of culturally diverse communities where agreement on critical values may not be easily obtained (Brooks & Normore, 2010) and the potential for students to experience negative influences substantial. In general terms, the focus for this character education movement continued to reflect deficit thinking about youth. Such thinking implies that youth must somehow be instructed on how to avoid the many hazards awaiting them, including, antisocial behaviour, low motivation, substance abuse, and poor levels of achievement (Damon, 2004).

Recently there has been a movement, referred to as positive youth development, (PYD; Damon; 2004), which asserts an alternative to the deficit model of student learning by focusing instead on their potential. While not oblivious to the challenges that students may encounter in their youth, proponents of the PYD approach embrace engaging and working to understand and educate youth, rather than correcting their dysfunction (Damon, 2004). In fact, challenges youth do face are seen as opportunities to develop their abilities to make positive choices. PYD asserts the need for positive moral beliefs to form part of personal identity (Damon, 2004). According to Nisan (1996), when a belief or value becomes integral to a person's identity, his or her choices are governed by a desire to conduct him/herself accordingly. Some claim that the emotional capacity for positive social conduct is innate, although the degree to which it is activated may vary (Damon, 1990), and that these variations may be related to unique values and beliefs they experience socially.

The objective for educators and parents alike is to assist youth in developing a strong sense of moral identity. According to Seligman (2011), establishing strong relational bonds to a social group where compassion, opportunities for perspective taking, and kindness are mirrored in members, can offer protective value against psychopathologies. To this end students must be engaged personally and be able to identify with their greater community to realize their socio-moral potential. This is not a simple matter, as systems to which students belong and encounter are not always static and orderly but constantly changing, as the members within each system change, a complex dynamic for students to navigate results (Larson, 2011). The current investigation was concerned with exploring for differences in female and male students' socio-moral reasoning from participating Grade 3, Grade 5, and Grade 8 classrooms within different demographic areas of a large public school board in Ontario, Canada.

Another possible version of character education, known as peace education, has also seen some greater attention in recent years. Noddings (2012) asserts that there are innate capacities in human beings that warrant consideration, such as the innate tendency to protect those who are genetically related. Within the context of a school community, students who have ample opportunities to learn and play with others, giving and receiving feedback and support, may develop relationships that allow them to identify as a group. According to Kohlberg and Piaget any form of character education must incorporate developmentally appropriate opportunities to take the perspectives of others and provide ample opportunities for children to work and play together. From the domain theory perspective offered by Nucci and Turiel (2009), adults could assist students in their abilities to reason and respond by using concomitant discipline, addressing moral, social

and personal transgressions distinctly, all of which must occur within key contexts, including family, school, and the community. For those who argue that affective intuition and emotion plays a greater role in making moral judgments and therefore relates to moral development (Cushman et al., 2006; Greene & Haidt, 2002), the need to develop caring relationships is reinforced, as it ought to be harder to cause harm to one that is cared about.

Even with all that is known, two main approaches to character education persist into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. According to the review of studies between 1995 and 2003 conducted by Schuitema, et al. (2008), the focus of character education is either on stimulating critical thinking and moral decision making skills or emphasizes a particular set of attributes or values, such as honesty, respect, and trustworthiness. These two general frameworks for character education apply to countries outside Canada, including the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia. For example, in 2003 Australia's Ministry of Education commissioned a study of values education and concluded that a "systematic and comprehensive approach to values education was needed," and in 2005 *The National Framework of Values Education for Australian Schools* was released (Webster, 2010, p. 465). The goal was to have students consistently apply the nine values identified. Once again, the emphasis is on the outcome, or expected behaviour, rather than developing reasoning abilities. This approach is criticized by Webster (2010) because it does not address beliefs or desires of students and seems to contradict other goals for education that place an emphasis on inquiry and critical thinking. Given this apparent disconnect between how academic and socio-moral agendas are expected to be addressed, it is perhaps not unreasonable to expect some confusion on the part of educators and students alike who attempt to action these mandates and again provides some rationale for the current investigation.

Of the 76 studies reviewed by Schuitema et al., (2008), 39 made recommendations for teaching strategies, which included a problem-based approach to instruction, cooperative learning and opportunities for autonomy to be exercised among students. However, very few of these studies measured the effectiveness of these strategies in terms of student experiences and learning outcomes (Schuitema et al., 2008). A number of countries including the United Kingdom, the United States, Australia, and parts of Canada have mandated character education in public schools, either as a stand-alone entity or as an implicit aspect of curriculum. Given that those mandates are in some cases directionless or in apparent disconnect with identified best teaching practices for academic goals, the knowledge and beliefs of educators would seem of increasingly significant importance. Empirical evidence linking educator knowledge and practice related to moral development of students through character education is largely missing from the literature. For this reason, educator knowledge of moral development, as well as their sense of efficacy and beliefs were explored within the current investigation. Educator knowledge and beliefs help inform educator practice and would seem an important aspect of elementary school reform focused on socio-moral development of students to understand.

### **Elementary School Educators: Knowledge and Practice**

Despite the long and complex history of delivering character education in North American schools and the importance of appropriate professional development, educator training for the task has been found to be largely absent (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lickona, 1993; Milson 2003; Nucci et al., 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007). The Character Education Partnership (CEP), in recognizing this situation, funded three preservice

education faculties to develop components within their existing programs of study that would address moral development and character education (Nucci et al., 2005).

According to Nucci et al. (2005), this change in course syllabi was well received, as was the use of domain theory as the framework for the program despite differences of opinion in the meaning of morality and character. Revell and Arthur (2007) similarly found that teacher candidates are hungry for opportunities to develop their knowledge and skills in the area of moral development, although the opportunities to do so are inconsistent.

Findings from the Nucci et al. 2005 study indicated that teacher candidate knowledge was impacted most dramatically when they participated in the adjusted program for enhanced understanding of moral development and then experienced follow up character education content either in student teaching or field courses. Further, participants in the experimental groups were found to have higher reported efficacy scores for delivering character education curricula than the control group (see Nucci et al., 2005 for full study details). These findings are promising for the field, as they indicate potential benefits for increasing the amount of time preservice programs allocate for instruction in socio-moral development, and classroom practices which link to social and moral development using a specific research-based approach. This research had statistically significant findings for the impact on educators' knowledge and sense of efficacy for delivering character education programming (Nucci et al., 2005). Further work is needed to identify whether these results can be replicated in other such faculties, and still a gap remains for those educators already in practice. As long as educator learning in the realm of socio-moral development remains elusive or altogether absent, opportunities for educators to engage in reflective practice and discussion to clarify their

thinking will not occur reliably. This has significant implications for the professional judgment of educators essential to their work (Revell & Arthur, 2007) including undermining confidence and accountability.

### **Social Cognition: Children's/Youth's Judgment and Motivation**

What is it that moves a student from judgment through to action, and why is it that at times this judgment does not align with the observed action? Morality requires that one act in ways that are consistent with one's moral judgment; it is not sufficient to know the right thing to do and not do it. This in turn requires that moral understanding be translated into a sense of personal responsibility, action. According to Chandler, Sokol, and Wainryb (2000), the ability of an individual to judge the morally right course of action is closely associated with his or her ability to interpret information from his or her surroundings accurately, content as well as understanding of truth, and to reconcile this information with his or her personal beliefs. Their findings have led them to conclude that even young schoolage children will be less likely to forgive actions which cause harm to another (a moral universal principle) if the individual believes that it is the morally right thing to do, but will forgive the individual if the same action is based on an honestly held but flawed informational belief. Gini, et al., (2011) in their study of moral competence and compassion identified that in younger children (age 9-10 years) accidental harm is viewed more harshly than attempted harm. By adolescence (age 13-14) this thinking is reversed. In other words, intentions matter in the determination of culpability, and therefore the reactions to such behaviour can be expected to differ by age (Piaget, 1932/1965). The current investigation incorporated students of different ages to explore

for differences in the beliefs and desire aspects of their socio-moral reasoning and judgment related to grade (age) and gender.

According to systems and relational metatheory, the nature of reciprocal relations between individuals and their surroundings will influence both the environment and the individuals within (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008). The influence of people in positions of power cannot be overlooked as also potentially motivating behaviour. The renowned study known as the Milgram Experiments (1974) was perhaps a demonstration of the power of influence to motivate action. The decision and subsequent action of adult subjects to shock another human being at increasingly high levels, thereby causing harm to another in order to secure experimenter approval, was examined. It was apparent to the subjects that their continuation with the experiment meant causing harm to another, and yet they continued to obey the instruction of the experimenter. According to Turiel (1983), these subjects needed to reconcile the desire not to fail the experimenters of a prestigious university (Yale) with their own sense of morality.

Within the context of a school environment a student may be similarly influenced by adults, and even some peers within the environment, marking a potential deficit in their ability to reconcile their judgment with actions. As suggested by Haidt (2012) and based on the work of Kohlberg, such power imbalances make it difficult (if not impossible) for students to take the perspective of adults to help inform their reasoning. The influence of power on student decision making again serves to reinforce the importance of equipping educators with the necessary knowledge and skills to develop socio-moral reasoning and judgment making in students using means which are developmentally suited to the learner.



To understand more fully the relationship between thought and action, it may be useful to also consider the development of theory of mind. Theory of mind is a capacity that develops from infancy to adulthood that enables individuals to process and respond to stimuli to which they are exposed. This requires some understanding of “mind”. Mind referring to the “unobservable”, including desires, beliefs, emotions, and perceptions must therefore be developed. Through the development of theory of mind an individual attempts to explain and predict the actions of others (Flavell et al., 2002) and inasmuch respond or act suitably. Theory of mind then becomes a basis for social information processing and understanding and may therefore also have bearing on an individual’s socio-moral functioning.

According to Hughes and Leekam (2004), social interactions are transformed with the level of skill in “reading the minds” of others. Hughes and Leekam, in their review of theory of mind literature, uncovered that the development of an individual’s theory of mind can have positive, negative, or neutral implications for interpersonal relationships, noting that an individual’s awareness of the internal states of another are associated with empathy as well as malicious behaviour. In other words, some may choose to act in ways which compromise principles of justice or cause harm to others, **because** they believe they know how it will make another individual feel, and that is the outcome they desire.

Consider the schoolyard bully, where an individual may be fully aware of the harm he or she may cause to another as a result of his or her actions, and yet he or she chooses to act in such ways. Many moral transgressions include either a physical or verbal form of aggression; by default many acts of aggression, either verbal or physical, are moral transgressions (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004; Turiel, 1998). Recent research by

Gini, et al., (2011) identified that children who bully have strong moral competence; they are able to judge right from wrong, but lack moral compassion (emotional awareness and conscience) to act on their judgment. This study would suggest that while students might be able to explain the moral course of action, they lack the ability to empathize with another, which would allow them to demonstrate moral compassion. In addition, they tend to justify aggressive behaviour as necessary for achieving their instrumental goals.

Bringing together the model of social adjustment for social information processing (Crick & Dodge, 1994) with the domain theory model of moral development (Nucci, 2001; Smetana, 1995; Turiel, 1983) is useful for examining the concepts of social cognition and behaviour, specifically where “knowing” does not always translate into “doing” (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004). Domain theory is useful in helping differentiate between what is moral and what is not, and how social information is processed impacts subsequent actions (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004). In both models, the child’s ability to understand the intentions of another (e.g., Did they mean to hurt me?) has an impact on the subsequent behaviour of the child. Coie and Dodge (1998) found that both aggressive and nonaggressive children perceive *intentional* acts of harm to be wrong. Gini et al., (2011) further identified a difference between the judgments of bullies and victims. Such that bullies were more likely than victims to judge attempted harm more negatively, suggesting the moral competence of bullies to judge is fully intact. Nonetheless, this reasoning does not always translate into moral outcomes. Of particular note are the children who are “objective oriented” or proactive aggressors, who do not tend to rely on moral principles in their reasoning about the “permissibility” of their intended behaviour but rather are motivated by some expectation of personal gain or reward. Such

individuals tend to place greater value on instrumental goals (e.g., I want his lunch) over relational goals (e.g., I want to be a friend), (Crick & Dodge, 1994) and tend to judge aggressive responses less negatively (Gini et al., 2011) as a means to their ends.

What enables one to disregard principles of justice or human welfare in favour of using aggressive means to obtain what one desires? In these instances children are not motivated by reaction to a perceived wrong but by potential personal gain. Examining the behaviour of bullies, long believed to be socially inept, reveals a surprising finding according to Sutton, Smith, and Swettenham (1999). From their research studying 7-10-year-old bullies, they found that the “bully participants” were able to understand the emotional and mental states of a character in a story better than their classmates. Polman et al. (2007) found bullies do not lack the capacity to process social information even in ambiguous situations but value instrumental gain to a greater extent than relational gain. Having the ability to understand another’s point of view, based on this research, appears to be insufficient for choosing a moral course of action. Gini (2006) adds to the findings of Sutton, et al. by incorporating stories that called for recognizing and understanding moral emotions (moral cognition) such as guilt and shame by the participant. In this research, findings do not confirm that bullies have reduced moral cognitive processes, but are consistent in finding children identified as prosocial have high levels of performance on tasks requiring strong theory of mind as well as moral cognition. Such socially competent individuals tend to favour relational goals over more instrumental gains (Nelson & Crick, 1999).

Activities that require taking into consideration the perspectives and needs of others help forge relationships and may serve to enhance relational motivation among

students. Gini et al., (2011) found while bullies possess the necessary moral competence to judge right from wrong, they lack the ability to see the impact of their actions on the welfare of another as a problem, and govern their actions accordingly. The lack of moral compassion along with a tendency to value instrumental goals more favourably than relational goals allows bullies to disengage morally and justify their actions without feelings of guilt or remorse. The ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982) distinguishes between caring for and caring about others. Noddings (2002) stipulates that to care for requires a relationship. Understanding the needs of another is key and, as such, reciprocity in these relations is required (Noddings, 2010). Without this level of understanding, one may care about others without actually taking into consideration what the cared for believe they need.

Socially competent children tend to be more focused on relational goals, that is, maintaining relationships and friendships, than more aggressive children, who tend to focus mainly on instrumental gains (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004). Accepting that moral outcomes require some understanding of the result for the victim, as suggested by Turiel (1983), and that they must also feel some empathy or sympathy for the situation or perspective of the other person (Hoffman, 2000) could mean that children who choose more instrumental goals either do not have the capacity to appreciate the experiences of others (i.e., ability to empathize) or they choose to prioritize their personal gain over the condition of another. Understanding which explanation is more accurate should prove useful in determining appropriate preventative and intervention methods and is deserving of further consideration. The social information processing model in concert with domain theory and a bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner &

Morris, 1998) as well as a systems relational metatheory (R. Lerner & Overton 2008) which help explain the relationship between individuals and their surrounding environment were used to help explore and interpret differences in the beliefs and desires of female and male students from different grades in the current investigation.

Consistent with domain theory, the social information processing model asserts that the outcomes chosen by children are influenced by their abilities to accurately interpret and understand the situations in which they find themselves (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004). This process is understood to be highly complex, as dynamics within and between individuals are not standardized (Larson, 2011) and of course, not all judgments result in concordant action, as with the morally competent bully (Gini et al., 2011). With domain theory, the distinction between social conventions, moral, and personal matters are part of this understanding. Social information processing theory asserts that reasoning is the result of an interaction between real-time processing of a situation in concert with more latent memories of past experiences and follows six successive steps.

The first two steps involve the interpretation and encoding of a situation, providing an answer to what is happening and potentially why (e.g., as a student passes a small group he or she hears laughter and observes one of the students pointing in his or her direction). Based on these understandings, which represent their past experiences in concert with the current situation, the child determines his or her goal or intention (e.g., “I just want to get to the bus to go home”, or “They can’t laugh at me, I’ll show them!”).

The next two steps in this model call for an evaluation of the options available and the potential outcomes from the options. Incorporating domain theory, the outcome options are weighed from moral, social and personal perspectives. While emotion is thought to play a role in judgment and action of individuals (Greene & Haidt, 2002),

particularly where the issue at hand impacts them directly it does not happen in isolation, but rather in concert with cognitive processes to greater or lesser extents given the circumstances. Finally, the child will act upon his or her decision (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004). The ambiguity of some situations where moral, personal, and, social convention elements appear to collide, present the greatest challenge in explaining reasoning, judgments made, and subsequent action of individuals. Complex social situations were employed in the current investigation for these reasons.

While domain theory is interested in domain differences, that is, how children organize their socio-moral knowledge, social information processing models are concerned more with individual differences in the coding of this information among children (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004). To determine the nature of encoding and interpretation of the situation, children are asked questions which elicit responses about what is happening and why. To assess their reasoning about potential outcomes and consequences, children are asked about their goals for the given situation (e.g., would they prefer to be liked by another, or do they wish to obtain some personal gain?) or the strategies they would choose to obtain these goals. In social information processing studies as well as domain theory studies, responses to such questions, when the situation being depicted is clearly hostile and intentions are purposeful, tend to be consistent. Gini et al., (2011) for example, found all student participants (victim, defender, and bully groups), regardless of age or gender judged successful harm, as the most morally bad action relative to either attempted harm and accidental harm conditions. This finding suggests that children who bully do not necessarily suffer from a socio-moral delay in interpreting social cues (to judge right from wrong). However, they lack the moral

conscience to care about the needs of others when it comes to their own behaviour.

Therefore the lack of consistency between reason and action may be attributable to a lack of emotion and selfishness.

Other research has concluded that many situations represent a mixing of at least two domains (Smetana, 1981) and that in some circumstances a social convention, once established, becomes the norm, and to break such a norm can be seen as a moral issue. For example, children line up at a water fountain, a simple organizational arrangement for orderly and safe use of the fountain; a student who cuts to the front of the line because of extreme thirst may be seen as morally in the wrong because it is not “fair” to the other children who have been waiting. Do children subordinate the moral element to maintain the social convention, or can they coordinate the two domains, recognizing the situation as both moral and social, or can they not resolve these two domains? Clearly such reasoning denotes significant processing skill and for that reason may explain some developmental differences in children’s abilities to subordinate or coordinate domains (Nucci, 2001). The presence of high emotion may add yet another dimension and explanation for different outcomes. Other findings are suggestive of individual and group differences in the “reading” of complex situations by adolescents (Horn, 2003). Students require support to develop the cognitive skills necessary to navigate the complexities of conditions they encounter in the real world (Larson, 2011), support they should receive from parents and educators concerned with their care.

The bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000) provides a framework for understanding conditions, including dynamic processes of interaction, in an environment, and heritability, believed to influence human development. Essentially, a

life's course is made up of a series of interactions between human beings and their surroundings. As human beings are engaged in this dynamic process over extended periods of time, some genetic predispositions are actualized to greater or lesser extents, ultimately influencing human development. As human development evolves, so too does the surrounding environment, and so the cycle continues. The goal would be to create situations where both the individual and the surrounding context benefit (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008). Creating certain prototypical learning environments is reinforced for educators based on their experiences and understanding of what works. Moving to less familiar practices to facilitate socio-moral development requires a leap of faith (on the part of educators and parents especially), as well as access to knowledge and opportunity to practice, and will take considerable time to be viewed as the new "normal".

Taken together, social information processing, domain theory, and understanding of a bio-ecological model and systems relational metatheory may help in understanding the relations between thought and action and any evolution of these aspects of human development. Crick and Dodge (1994) assert that social experiences lead to the development of long-term memories which form social knowledge, these structures become the bank from which children draw when they find themselves in different situations. Children process different cues in the moment, which then influence the mental representation of their options and the potential outcomes, all of which then becomes part of the child's general knowing and will influence future behaviour.

The bio-ecological model, useful in describing the processes affecting human development, proposes that development takes place through numerous complex interactions between people, objects, and symbols encountered in the immediate



environment (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). This model proposes that the transfer of energies between children and their immediate environment may move in both directions, to and from the child, referred to as a proximal process, and that through this process competence or dysfunction may develop (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). The duration, intensity, timing, and frequency of these interactions are thought to be of importance in arriving at developmental outcomes. Of note is the absence of *quality of interaction* as a variable of importance. As students in public schools within North America spend upwards of 6 hours a day in the company of their peer group and teachers, the bio-ecological model may be useful for considering the influence of these interactions on socio-moral development.

This study combined both social information processing and domain theory methodologies to explore different conditions in which children form their longterm socio-moral knowledge bank and provide a snapshot of the decision-making they employ. The bio-ecological model in conjunction with systems relational metatheory served as a framework for exploring the context where students interacted with one another, educators, and their surroundings as a whole. The intent was to add to the moral development through character education literature by describing relations between moral development knowledge and beliefs pertaining to character education held by educators and the practices they employ to establish and maintain learning conditions and the socio-moral reasoning and judgment of the students in different classrooms.

### **Summary of the Present Study**

The present conditions in many public schools across Ontario, Canada reflect cultural and religious diversity, growing attention to changing instructional strategies for

academic achievement, and continuing advances in technology, which increase means of communication and necessitate a level of moral literacy not previously encountered. The landscape for moral development through character education within this context ranges from values education in the traditional sense to more reason-based approaches but is largely left to the discretion of educators. A common concern shared by some in England, the United States, and Canada is the apparent lack of preparation or ongoing support for educators to develop their knowledge of moral development theory and skill in character development practices. Based on the history of character education in North American public schools, the evolution of psychological and philosophical theories related to moral development, and pedagogy of educators, it is evident that knowledge and understanding related to the most effective means for advancing moral development of students may yet be identified. The current investigation intended to shed further light on the moral development knowledge of educators, their beliefs and sense of efficacy regarding character education practices, and the socio-moral reasoning of their students within a public school system in southwestern Ontario.

While there is extensive psychological, philosophical, and pedagogical literature related to moral development, there is limited empirical evidence to relate the knowledge and beliefs of educators with their classroom practices and the socio-moral reasoning, judgment and planned action of their students that is not specific to the implementation of a branded program. The current study connects psychological, philosophical, and pedagogical constructs within a Canadian context and addresses the following shortcomings identified in the aforementioned literature. First, there is recognition that an educator's knowledge and beliefs provide the lens through which educational strategies

(including classroom management strategies) are selected (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005). The current study explores the relations between educator knowledge of moral development and their sense of efficacy and beliefs related to character education practices.

Second, there is currently little empirical research on educator strategies and student learning experiences that does not relate specifically to academic achievement (Baker et al., 2009) or the impact of branded character education type programs. During the second phase of this study, learning experiences of students are explored using the independent variables: grade and gender, for similarities and differences in beliefs and desires. Specifically the abilities of elementary school age students to decipher complex situations demonstrating socio-moral capacities, including their motivation for action, are explored.

Using the following seven research questions, this investigation tested three separate, yet related hypotheses. The first research question is are there relations between educator knowledge of moral development and sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education? Second, does educator sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education differ based on school setting, years of experience, or grade taught? The hypothesis for these research questions was based on the premise that educators will have a limited knowledge of formal moral development theory. It was hypothesized that educator participants would employ different practices intended to target student socio-moral development based on their beliefs and sense of efficacy but also based on school setting. A working hypothesis was that classroom practices that tend to emphasize rules as the basis for action rather than critical thinking that highlights principles of justice,

welfare of others, and caring relationships would align more closely with authoritarian style pedagogy and limited knowledge of moral development processes.

The next four research questions focused on the socio-moral development of student participants. First, is there a difference in socio-moral reasoning (beliefs) based on learning conditions? Second, is there a difference in desires (relational or instrumental motivation) based on learning conditions? Third, under what conditions are students likely to subordinate and or coordinate social and moral domains in complex social situations? Fourth, under what conditions do students report behaviour consistent with caring relationships? The intention with respect to these four questions was to explore student socio-moral reasoning abilities, specifically their abilities to reason in complex situations and their motivation for action. It was hypothesized that student ability to use moral principles or social conventions and to do so because of instrumental or relational motivation would differ in relation to their grade and gender. The working hypothesis was that when students are engaged as active participants in classrooms, where expectations are high and relationships are reinforced, the frequency of positive socio-moral outcomes would also be high. This hypothesis was directly related to student ability to coordinate and/or subordinate matters of social convention where moral principles are also present. A second working hypothesis was, therefore, that student ability to coordinate and/or subordinate matters of social convention, where moral principles were also present, would differ based on grade and gender.

Finally, it was hypothesized that in schools where educator practices reflected authoritative pedagogy, school cultures would be described as: positive, inviting, and supportive by student and educator participants. The seventh and final research question

explored possible relations between students' socio-moral reasoning and teacher-reported student socio-moral behaviour.

To summarize, the purpose of this study was to explore educators' knowledge of moral development, their sense of efficacy and beliefs regarding character education, and grade and gender differences in Canadian elementary school-aged students' socio-moral reasoning, including the application of instrumental or relational motivation in their decision-making.

This study addressed the aforementioned gap in the literature by collecting data within three school contexts in southern Ontario, Canada. This study addressed the absence of literature on Canadian educators' knowledge of moral development theory related to their character education practices (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lickona, 1993; Milson 2003; Revell & Arthur, 2007; Nucci et al., 2005), through the exploration of educator knowledge of moral development and their sense of efficacy and beliefs regarding their character education practices. Finally, given the scant empirical research on Canadian educators' grassroots strategies to deliver character education and student learning experiences (Schuitema et al., 2008), this study explored the possible influence of age or grade-level and gender variables on students' socio-moral reasoning and judgment (decision making) including the nature of motivation inherent to the decision making.

Historically, teaching strategies, and the resulting classroom environment culture have been studied for their effects on student academic achievement, not their socio-moral development (Baker et al., 2009). Additionally, the findings from within may provide direction to boards and ministries of education to support educators in their work

to develop healthy student socio-moral being. This study was expected to contribute meaningfully to the existing body of literature pertaining to student moral development achieved through character education by addressing these identified gaps.

### **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH QUESTIONS, HYPOTHESES, AND METHOD**

This chapter describes the methodological approach and research design used for the current investigation. A mixed methodology was employed to explore quantitative data obtained from the responses of student participants as well as qualitative data obtained from both student and educator participants in this three-phase study. Included in this chapter are the research questions, hypotheses, and method. To provide a further bridge between the theoretical and empirical background information presented in Chapter Two, a short rationale for the current investigation is also provided.

#### **Study Rationale**

School reform is a significant undertaking that has most commonly focused on intellectual advancement of children rather than improving social and moral elements (Watson et al., 1998) of their development. Character education is an intentional effort at advancing socio-moral abilities of students. With the perspective that morality is both an inter- and intrapersonal capacity, the advancement of moral beings incorporates developmentally suited cognitive processes that occur within the context of a supportive social environment (Wren, 2008). From a bio-ecological perspective, interactions between an individual, other people, and symbols from their surrounding environment are integral to the development of competence or dysfunction (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000) in human beings.

Systems relational theory provides further support for viewing context and human development within it as an integrated process, where both the individual and the context may benefit (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008). A social–cognitive perspective describes “context” as more than physical environmental factors or perceived effects of an environment on individual behaviour (Bandura, 1986). Using a social–cognitive lens, cognition is thought to

mediate context and therefore must be studied as a conjoined feature in moral development (Helwig, 1995). The current investigation explored female and male students' socio-moral reasoning for differences across three target grades.

From a quantitative perspective, theories assist in explaining any relations or differences between variables under investigation, while in qualitative research, they become the lens for inquiry (Creswell, 2009). Therefore, theories of social–cognitive moral development and information processing along with a bio-ecological model, and systems relational theory of human development frame the current mixed–method investigation and were also utilized to help explain findings.

Recently mixed–method designs and the use of triangulation of data have been viewed as beneficial within a health development context (Dixon-Woods, Agarwal, Young, Jones, & Sutton, 2004), and within social sciences contexts (Creswell, 2009). Miller and Fredericks (2006) suggest that a mixed–method sequential analysis beginning with quantitative data might be helpful in educational contexts. The practice of triangulation has been found to be of particular value when the phenomenon under investigation is known to be complex in nature (Cohen & Manion, 1981) and may help to explain any results that appear contradictory. To quote R. Lerner and Overton (2008),

By understanding the qualities of life that young people, their parents, teachers, peers, and mentors believe matter, by triangulating such assessments with knowledge gained (through many different types of observational methods and research designs) of the youth-context relations that reflect the basic relational process of human development, we can conduct scholarship that will matter in deep, valued, and important ways” (p. 251).



The current study explores the knowledge of moral development and sense of efficacy and beliefs of educators regarding character education. An attempt to capture the complexity of socio-moral development through both quantitative and qualitative measures and analyses, within elementary school environments, rather than a laboratory-based context is made.

This study was completed in three phases and incorporated both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative methods useful for relating factors and comparing groups (Creswell, 2008), allowed for exploration of student cognition, specifically their socio-moral reasoning. Further quantitative methods allowed for comparisons and identification of differences between student groups (by age and gender). Quantitative data obtained from student questionnaires were used for correlational analyses as well as ANOVAs. Qualitative methods, somewhat more recent in educational research history (Creswell, 2008), are useful in clarifying controversies related to complex paradigms (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005) and are useful in “understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (Creswell, 2009, p. 4). According to Lincoln and Cannella (2004), these methods are suited to “examining the complex and dynamic contexts of public education” (p. 7). Educator questionnaires, transcripts from semistructured educator interviews, as well as student vignette responses were considered qualitatively. While some qualitative research aims to situate the researcher in the construction of the social reality or human problem he or she is exploring (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), that was not the aim of the current study. Findings obtained through qualitative analyses of educator interview transcripts and the student vignette data were

triangulated with quantitative data and allowed for greater depth of investigation than would have been possible with only quantitative measures and data collection.

The current investigation followed a quantitative–qualitative sequence for inquiry and attempted to mix data collection methods (quantitative and qualitative in nature) and worldview (pragmatism and constructivism). The inspiration for this research came from the introduction of character education as a mandated requirement from Kindergarten to Grade 12 in publically funded schools in Ontario. This mandate raised awareness of a problem: that there was virtually no evidence based support for educators fulfilling this obligation. As this study was invested in exploring for relations between what educators know about moral development theory and their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education, as well as any relations with student socio-moral reasoning, the worldview is in part pragmatic in nature, attempting to describe current conditions in public elementary school classrooms in a practical way.

There is also an element of constructivist worldview in the sense that it is recognized, there may not be a definite truth in terms of moral development, but rather a continuum of perspectives. The constructivist perspective is not therefore in the form of theory generation but in constructing social/historical understanding of relations between moral development knowledge and practice of educators and the socio-moral reasoning and judgment of students. This understanding is based on the perspectives of student and educator participants and intended the purpose of improving conditions through increased awareness. In these two regards, this investigation utilizes a mixed–method design.

Character education is viewed by some as a means for educators to assist in developing moral citizens (Berkowitz & Hoppe, 2009; Lickona, 1991). While still a

relatively new field of research, character education has enjoyed more attention from researchers in recent decades. In most cases, what have been studied are the outcomes from specific programs, rather than specific elements or strategies and their outcomes (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004; U.S. Department of Education, 2006;). Alternatively, studies have investigated the *what* or the *why* of character education rather than the *how* (Schuitema et al., 2008). At the time of this study, there were over 50 studies underway in the United States through the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools Partnerships in Character Education Program, to investigate character education's effects on academic achievement and other variables (Corrigan, Chapman, Grove, Walls, & Vincent, 2007; U.S Department of Education: What Works Clearinghouse, 2006).

At the time of undertaking this study, there was no Canadian research available on educator knowledge of moral development described in relation to their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education practices they choose to employ or the relation of educator knowledge, beliefs and practices, to student socio-moral development. This would seem especially important, given that educator knowledge and beliefs are understood to inform their practice and that, in the absence of direction to implement specific branded programs, most educators rely on "homegrown" or "grass roots" strategies for character education delivery (Benninga et al., 2006).

Most schools tend to create their own approach to socio-moral development and call it character education (Benninga et al., 2006). The specific practices employed would be expected to prioritize specific skills or values (Narvaez, Bock, Endicott, & Lies, 2004)

based on educator understanding (consciously or unconsciously) of how moral development contributes to character formation and forms part of their pedagogy.

The knowledge, beliefs, and practices of educators in concert with broader community variables may lead to different learning contexts and ultimately student learning. For example, educators who are not aware of the complexity of the psychological aspects of character formation or the distinctions between social, moral, and personal domains may consider posting attribute terms on a bulletin board and giving out certificates to students who demonstrate these attributes to be delivering character education (Corrigan et al., 2007). Such a practice would likely also align with specific classroom/school organization and serve to reinforce the overall climate of the classroom/school environment.

According to Leming (2008), the study of the processes employed by educators determining which practices they choose to advance student moral development is critical. These processes are evident in the lived environment or climate of the school for students and staff. It was anticipated that in the absence of direction to use branded programs and the missing professional development in the field of moral development for educators, the character education strategies given priority by Ontario's educators would depend upon their pedagogy and not on knowledge of moral development theory.

Educators (preservice and practicing) typically receive no training in advancing moral development of students (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lickona, 1993; Milson 2003; Nucci et al., 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007). Without clear understanding of the psycho-social elements related to moral development, it will be difficult for educators to know how to proceed with specific educational strategies (Lapsley, 2008) to advance socio-

moral reasoning of students. Included in this knowledge is understanding that matters of social convention differ from matters of morality, that at times these two domains can coincide, and that abilities to subordinate or coordinate domains will differ depending on individual skills. Further is the degree to which educators feel they can influence the socio-moral aspect of their students' character. Based on work by Milson (2003), a sense of self-efficacy, the belief that one has the skills necessary and is able to use them to impact student socio-moral development, is predictive of success in the classroom.

A school environment can be thought of as incorporating culture, the underlying values and ideology (Anderson, 1982; Creemers & Reezigt, 1999), and climate, the practices and lived experiences of these values (Creemers & Reezigt, 1999). School environments are determined in part by educator pedagogy. Where school culture and climate are described as positive, members of a learning community should feel a sense of belonging and safety, which in turn may reinforce commitment to that community (as a cohesive group), individual feelings of worth, and a greater number of moral outcomes than a school where the culture is described as less positive.

As an aspect of learning conditions, social interactions are key to development (Bandura, 1986). The social relationships that students engage in on a daily basis are vital to the process for character development (McClellan, 1999). Providing opportunity for moral autonomy instead of relying on a barrage of social norms to dictate rules and interpret current circumstances aligns with the domain theory view of what character education should entail (Nucci et al., 2005). Educators determine what these relationships look like in part through application of their educational pedagogy (e.g., their belief in student ability to learn, their use of cooperative learning, buddy systems, peer to peer

discussion, etc.) to manage the classroom environment and facilitate program. Having high expectations, responding to student needs, and maintaining caring relationships (an authoritative approach), impact not only the academic achievement of students but also their intra- and interpersonal skills because they influence the nature of relationships.

Piaget (1965) argued that while a child progresses developmentally in his or her character formation, it is in concert with people within his or her environment. The bio-ecological model for human development describes a process of reciprocal exchange between individuals and their environment (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000). This reciprocal exchange is believed to ultimately influence both the individual and the surrounding context, which will subsequently influence others in the environment. Understanding the nature of specific relations between individuals and the surrounding environment (context) is believed to be integral to optimizing positive outcomes (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008).

The success of character education in advancing socio-moral development of students does not depend upon curriculum or the use of branded programs but rather on the relationships which form the foundation for the school's culture (Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Bulach, 2002) and the knowledge and skill level of educators to create learning environments where students can flourish. Rethinking traditional instructional pedagogy may be required, where the teacher is no longer the source for all learning or problem solving but rather the facilitator for student discussion and discovery, enabling students to be highly engaged in the process of knowledge and values construction. In terms of interpersonal skill development, such an approach has been found to nurture the growth of autonomy in peer relationships and can connect compassion with justice (Turiel,

2006). It was anticipated that the educators of each of the target classrooms in the present study would use practices intended to engage students and develop their relationships as part of their character education practices to varying degrees. The extent to which these practices encourage moral outcomes remains unclear and is deserving of study.

### **Research Questions**

Given the conditions in the field of education regarding student socio-moral development described above and in Chapter Two, this mixed-method study was designed with seven research questions. The purpose of this study was to explore relations between educator knowledge of moral development, their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education, and the socio-moral reasoning of students including, the application of instrumental or relational motivation in their decision-making.

1. Are there relations between educator knowledge of moral development and sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education practices?
2. Does educator sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education differ based on school setting, years of experience, or grade taught?

The goals of these first two questions were to first explore and describe qualitatively any relations between educator knowledge of moral development and their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education practices, and second, to describe qualitatively any differences in these findings based on independent variables (setting, years teaching, and grade taught).

3. Is there a difference in socio-moral reasoning (beliefs) of student participants based on learning conditions?

4. Is there a difference in socio-moral desires (relational or instrumental motivation) of student participants based on learning conditions?
5. Under what conditions are students likely to subordinate and or coordinate social and moral domains in complex social situations?
6. Under what conditions do students report behaviour consistent with caring relationships?

The goals with respect to questions 3 through 6 were threefold, and focused on exploring any differences based on learning conditions. First, the goal was to describe the propensity of elementary school age students, male and female, from different grades to use principles of human welfare and justice in their socio-moral reasoning and, to second, describe their abilities to subordinate and or coordinate the social and moral elements present in complex social situations and third, to describe their motivation for action in such situations.

7. What, if any, relation exists between socio-moral reasoning and reported behaviour of students across participating elementary schools relative to participant-described school culture and educational pedagogy implemented in participating classrooms?

The goal of this question was to explore for relations among educator practices, student socio-moral reasoning, and described school cultures.



## **Hypotheses**

Based on the theoretical and empirical background relating elements of psychological, philosophical, and pedagogical theories to socio-moral development provided in Chapter Two, there were three hypotheses. The first hypothesis was that, since educator knowledge of moral development would not be well established, educators would rely more heavily on pedagogy, practices best interpreted with frameworks for parenting. Earlier research by Walker (2008) suggests that educator practices interpreted with a parenting framework (Baumrind, 1991) are predictive of social and academic competence among students. For example, character education practices which emphasize rules and consequences for breaking them as the basis for action, rather than critical thinking that highlights principles of justice, welfare of others, and caring relationships, may be expected to align more closely with authoritarian style pedagogy and limited knowledge of moral development processes.

Next, it was hypothesized that students' use of principles of justice, human welfare, and caring relationships, as their rationale for decision-making would differ based on their grade and gender. The working hypothesis was that where students were engaged as active participants in classrooms, where expectations were high and relationships were reinforced, creating a sense of connectedness, the frequency of positive socio-moral outcomes would also be high. This hypothesis is directly related to student tendencies to coordinate and/or subordinate matters of social convention in their judgments where moral principles are also present. Thus, a second working hypothesis was that student inclination to subordinate and/or coordinate matters of social convention to moral principles would differ based on grade and gender.

Finally, it was hypothesized that in schools where educator practices aligned more closely with authoritative pedagogy, school climates would be described as positive, inviting, and supportive by student and educator participants. Such environments might also be expected to yield higher rates of moral outcome behaviour among students.

Understanding what, why, and how certain instructional strategies intended to support student socio-moral development were used by educators in relation to their students' learning experiences is of educational significance because it unites educator knowledge and beliefs with the socio-moral reasoning (beliefs and desires) of students. This study perhaps sheds greater light on the need to support educators in their task of advancing socio-moral reasoning levels of children as part of their character education practices by highlighting current conditions in the participating classrooms. The richness of this study is in the triangulation of quantitative data obtained from students with descriptive data from educators, including that pertaining to classroom practices, and the descriptive data from the student vignettes. Identifying what educators know of moral development and how educators feel about their level of influence in relation to student socio-moral reasoning may provide insight into ways to support educators in their practice. It is anticipated that positive socio-moral outcomes for students could be obtained through the replication of specific learning conditions created by educators once identified within the present study.

### **Method**

This section provides a description of participants and procedures employed to collect data from the study's participants. There is a description of how participants were obtained, how instruments were implemented, and how participants were debriefed.

There was one instrument employed in quantitative data collection for this investigation, the student questionnaire. For qualitative data collection, the educator

questionnaire, interviews with educators, and student responses to vignettes were employed. Both the student and educator questionnaires were modified slightly from their original forms and piloted prior to the commencement of this study. The changes made, and the process used in this pilot, are outlined in the current section. The scoring employed for the educator and student questionnaires, as well as the coding methods employed for the educator interviews and the student vignettes are also described. To begin, the process of obtaining Research Ethics approval (file # 10-040) is briefly outlined.

As this study involved human participants, both children and adults, it was necessary to secure ethics approval from both the degree-granting university and the research department of the participating school board. The process began with the university Ethics Board. Copies of all instruments and correspondence between the researcher and potential participants were presented for review as well as an outline of the study, its potential benefits and risks, and the measures taken to minimize these risks. For example, the researcher is also an employee of the board of education where the study was conducted. This fact was not withheld from participants, so it was important to take measures to avoid having any educator or student participant feel pressured to participate. This was articulated in the informed consent along with details outlining the purpose of the investigation and what would be involved should they choose to participate (or in the case of the student participants, should their parents consent to their child's participation). It was reiterated to students at the time of administering the questionnaire that their answers would not count on their report card but that it was important that they answer truthfully. Similarly, educators were told, on their consent, and again if they participated in the interview, that there was no evaluative component to their participation in this study.

While conducting this investigation the researcher was attending the schools of participants to deliver or pick up consent paperwork, administer the student questionnaire, or conduct educator interviews and was careful not to disclose the purpose of the visit to staff other than the school principal, who would already have knowledge of which staff were participating in the study. The participants were advised that while others might be aware of their participation in the study, their responses to questions asked would be kept confidential. Finally, participants were afforded the opportunity to obtain additional information from the researcher during the study and had the option of withdrawing their data at any time should they decide not to participate.

### **Participants**

The population from which participants were drawn is demographically diverse and exists within a large southern Ontario public school board. This school board incorporates rural, urban, and suburban areas. While all three types of areas consist of English language learners (ELL), single-parent households, high socioeconomic households, and high postsecondary education among mothers, the proportion of each of these characteristics may differ from one area to the next. As the learning environment was thought to be relevant to the current investigation, an effort to represent this diversity was made in the selection of schools to participate in the current study.

First, schools in the participating school board were categorized as either suburban, urban, or rural based on their geographic location (i.e., rural schools are located on the edges of the city limits, while urban schools are located in the city core area, and suburban schools are located in or near subdivisions usually located between the core and the rural areas). One (Kindergarten to Grade 8) elementary school from each geographic area was then selected randomly with the expectation that multiple classes of the same

grade would be represented in each school. It is the practice of the participating school board to use the research department as an intermediary for making contact with potential participants. Therefore, once schools were selected, the researcher notified the research department, who then extended an invitation to the administration (principal) of each of these schools. These administrators then contacted the researcher to confirm their interest in having their schools participate.

The administrator of each participating school was sent a letter explaining the intent of the study and was asked to invite teachers of Grades 3, 5, and 8 to participate. Given the possibility of multiple classes of each grade within each school there was a possibility of obtaining a large total sample of educator and student participants (200+). Once administrators had made initial contact with their staff and identified potentially interested participants, the researcher delivered a personal letter of invitation to the interested educators along with the necessary formal consent forms.

The randomly selected schools did not have multiple classes of the target grades and not all of teachers of the target grades ( $N = 7$ , 6 Female, 1 Male) agreed to participate. Three teachers from the suburban setting (Grade 3, Grade 5, Grade 8), two teachers from the urban setting (Grade 3 and Grade 5), and two teachers from the rural setting (Grade 3 and Grade 8) agreed to participate. When the researcher approached the administrators about grades that were not represented in two of the sites it was discovered that in one instance an Occasional Teacher had just taken over the target class, and in another, there had been a series of Occasional Teachers throughout the year. It was believed these inconsistencies would have made identifying any relations between student socio-moral reasoning and educator practices impossible. When three other schools were approached about participating, it was made clear that the administrators felt their teachers were overwhelmed with other

responsibilities and thought it better not to involve them in this study. At all times it was essential that the researcher not exert influence over any administrator or teacher and that the protocols within the participating school board be respected. For these reasons the study proceeded with fewer than expected participants, and serves to illustrate one of the challenges in conducting studies of this nature within the context of the school environment.

Once consents were collected from the educator participants their questionnaires (see Appendix A for a copy) were delivered to their home school with a requested date for completion. Completed questionnaires were collected from the educator participants, in most cases within a 2-week period. The researcher then contacted the educator participants by email to confirm one of the dates and times they had suggested on their questionnaire for the researcher to attend the class of the educator participant to explain the purpose of the study to their students, hand out consents, and answer any questions.

Student participants were from the classrooms of the seven participating educators (see Table 1 for exact breakdown of student participants by setting, grade, and gender). All seven participating classrooms were one of the three target grades: Grade 3, 5, or 8. There were no combined grade classes included in this study. A total of 140 student participants were possible based on 100% participation. There were a total of 68 student participants representing 49% of the entire population of the participating classrooms. The participation rate and class sizes varied between classes, ranging from 33% (3/9 Grade 3 students) to 65% (15/23 Grade 5 students). In all but the rural setting, ELL (English language learners) and students with special education needs (students requiring an Individual Education Plan) were present. However, only in the urban Grade 3 and 5 classes did students with special education needs or ELL designation participate in the current investigation.

Table 1

*Participant Structure for the Current Investigation*

	Urban		Suburban		Rural		Totals
No. of Educator Participants	Gr. 3	1	Gr. 3	1	Gr. 3	1	3
	Gr. 5	1	Gr. 5	1	Gr. 5	0	2
	Gr. 8	0	Gr. 8	1	Gr. 8	1	2
No. of Educator Interviewees	Gr. 3	1	Gr. 3	0	Gr. 3	1	2
	Gr. 5	0	Gr. 5	0	Gr. 5	0	0
	Gr. 8	0	Gr. 8	0	Gr. 8	1	1
No. of Student Participants by Target Grade	Gr. 3	10	Gr. 3	3	Gr. 3	13	26
	Male	5	Male	2	Male	6	
	Female	5	Female	1	Female	7	
	Gr. 5	15	Gr. 5	9	Gr. 5	0	24
	Male	8	Male	5	Male	0	
	Female	7	Female	4	Female	0	
	Gr. 8	0	Gr. 8	9	Gr. 8	9	18
	Male	0	Male	3	Male	5	
	Female	0	Female	6	Female	4	

*Note.* No. of educator participants: teachers who agreed to complete the modified UIC questionnaire ( $N = 7$ ); No. of educator interviewees: teachers who agreed to an interview ( $n = 4$ ); No. of student participants by target grade: students in the target grades who completed the modified Child Development Project Questionnaire ( $N = 68$ ).

The researcher attended the classroom of each participating educator on two separate occasions. The first was to explain the purpose of the study, including what participation would entail for potential student participants, and to hand out consent forms. The second visit was to collect the consents from the teacher and administer the questionnaire (see Appendix B) to the student participants. Student participants were those who had given their assent and whose parents had provided written consent for them to participate.

### **Pilot of Instruments**

Prior to commencing the data collection for the current investigation, a pilot of the modified educator and student questionnaires was conducted. The purpose of this pilot was to determine time estimations for completion, ensure clarity of questions for participants, and determine if any questions caused participants concern for any reason. Participants for the pilot included one student from each of the targeted grades (3, 5, and 8) as well as three educators known to the researcher, and were drawn from a suburban school setting.

The researcher, to gauge their interest in having their child participate in the pilot, informally approached parents of each of the student participants. The researcher explained the intent, what would be involved (completing a questionnaire), clarified that their child's responses would not be included in the data collection portion of the study, and that their name and school would not appear in the study. Parents were then provided consent forms as well as a student assent form and were asked to invite their child's participation. Once consents were received, each of the student participants attended the school office of the researcher to complete the questionnaire.



The questionnaire was read to all three student participants, and following its completion students were asked if there were any questions they did not understand or if there were any that they didn't feel comfortable answering. There were no questions students found caused them discomfort. There was one inconsistency in the scale used for one of the classroom supportiveness questions that was observed and corrected. The researcher also determined it would be best to include only the "open response vignettes" pertaining to each of the grades rather than all of the vignettes on the final page of the student questionnaire, and have students respond to these questions directly on the questionnaire rather than on separate paper. Time to complete the questionnaire ranged from 25 minutes (Grade 5 and Grade 8 participants) to 32 minutes (Grade 3 participant).

Prior to completing the questionnaire for educators, consent was obtained. First, the researcher approached known educators to gauge interest in participating in this pilot and explained that their responses would not be included in the findings and that their names would not appear in the study. The educators who agreed to participate in the pilot were then provided formal consents to sign and a copy of the questionnaire. Time to complete this questionnaire ranged from 12 to 30 minutes. There were no questions which caused discomfort; however it was pointed out that in the initial cover message to participants it would be helpful to have some information about some of the terminology used. This adjustment was made for the questionnaire administered for the data collection portion of the study.

### **Measures and Scoring Summary**

Given that this study intended to explore the socio-moral reasoning (beliefs and desires) of students, and educator knowledge of moral development and beliefs pertaining

to character education, there were two different measures employed. The educator participants completed a slightly modified version of the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Moral Development and Education Questionnaire (Nucci et al., 2005) in phase one. Student participants completed a slightly modified version of a student questionnaire, which was originally used to measure the impact of the Child Development Project (see Battistich, 2003; Battistich et al., 2000; Battistich, et al., 2004) in the second phase of this study. In a final phase of this study, additional data were collected via semistructured interviews with educator participants. Modifications to the original questionnaires were kept to a minimum but, where necessary to better reflect the focus of the current investigation, some omissions/substitutions or additions were made.

The modified UIC questionnaire is a Likert-scale type questionnaire and is divided into three parts. The first part of this measure is intended to evaluate knowledge related to moral development theory, character education, and classroom management practices and involves 14 multiple-choice style questions. This portion of the instrument has a Cronbach's alpha of .65. The second part measures for beliefs as well as sense of efficacy as "educators of character" and incorporates 32 Likert-scale type questions. Questions in this section target beliefs about teacher impact on moral development of students, along with beliefs pertaining to classroom management procedures and parental influence. For example, "I know how to use strategies that might lead to changes in students' concepts of fairness and concern for others" (Nucci et al., 2005, p. 89).

The UIC questionnaire has been used to measure knowledge pertaining to social and moral development as well as character education practices of teacher candidates taking a Child Development and Elementary Education course (Nucci et al.,

2005) and assumes some familiarity with social cognitive domain theory. For the purposes of this study, no such assumption was made and therefore it was the recommendation of the author of the questionnaire (personal communication with L. Nucci) to eliminate questions 21 and 25 from the data set in order to increase the Cronbach alpha measure.

In a subsequent administration of this instrument by Nucci, the reliability was further increased with the elimination of items 14, 16, 20, and 24 (personal communication). For the purposes of the current investigation the Cronbach alpha was run three ways: (a) with all 32 items, (b) with items 21 and 25 removed, and (c) with items 14, 16, 20, and 24 removed. The highest  $\alpha$  was determined with items 21 and 25 included but without items 14, 16, 20, and 24. This  $\alpha$  was .89. It is noteworthy to mention that because there was no assumption that educators would be familiar with social cognitive domain theory, a brief description was provided in the “message to participants” on the cover of the questionnaire they completed, which may account for these reliability findings.

The third portion of this instrument was modified to include background information, including years of teaching, grade taught, perception of school culture/climate, and school geographic location information. Educator participants were also able to indicate their willingness to participate in a semistructured interview with the researcher by answering a question in this section of the questionnaire (see Appendix C for a copy of the interview questions).

The student questionnaire was used originally to measure the impact of the Child Development Project (see Battistich, 2003; Battistich, et al., 2000; Battistich et al., 2004).

This universal program attempts to mediate the needs of the individual with the need for positive social relationships by finding balance between intra- and interpersonal needs (Battistich, 2008). It was modified with three additional vignette scenarios depicting social situations, as well as the elimination of some of the questions from each of the sections, to reduce its overall length and better meet the needs of the current study.

The complexity of the dynamic between social and moral understanding in decision making for children is too often underestimated (Nucci & Turiel, 2009). The additional open response vignettes were similar to those employed in social information and domain theory studies (see Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004) and were intended to gather data on student beliefs, specifically their inclination to coordinate and or subordinate social and moral domains and their desires, specifically their tendencies to use relational or instrumental gain rationales for action. They describe common (age appropriate) scenarios where participants must describe their course of action given the circumstances outlined as well as a rationale for their action. Participants were also asked if there were any circumstances where they might choose differently. For example, Nucci and Turiel (2009) found that if a child was struck by another who was described as emotionally vulnerable, or if the individual that could be potentially harmed in an indirect harm scenario was in any way handicapped, moral grounds for hitting back or instrumental gain for the respondent was impacted. Generally, where the characteristics were indicative of a handicap or emotional distress, empathy levels in the respondent were raised.

In each vignette for the current investigation the circumstances described involved either indirect or direct harm (i.e., direct harm implied intentional physical, social, or emotional harm; indirect harm implied unintentional harm) and potential conflict with the participant's goals (e.g., being late for school to help another student). Two scenarios for each of the target grades involved a mixing of social and moral domains to allow for exploration of their tendencies to prioritize and or coordinate domains. The current investigation did not provide specific details pertaining to the characteristics of the protagonist in all scenarios but did allude to illness in the final Grade 3 vignette, sadness in the final Grade 5 vignette, and personal injury in the Grade 8 vignette (see Table 2 for vignettes).

For the purposes of this study, student responses were evaluated based on their inclination toward instrumental gain for the participant (self-interest) or relational gain (other-mindedness). These responses were not weighted, but were instead categorical (nominal) in nature (instrumental, relational, combination, other). Responses were further evaluated to determine whether described action by the student was driven by knowledge of a social convention (i.e., a rule exists) and so there may be fear of punishment given as a rationale, and/or if the event is morally wrong (i.e., involves intentional injustice or harm to others), in which case some feelings of guilt for wrong-doing may be described. Similarly, these responses were viewed categorically (nominally) and were not weighted. See Appendix D for the coding rubric.

Table 2

*Vignette Scenarios Given for Student Response*

Target Grade	Vignette Scenario
Grade 3, 5 & 8	1. You are waiting to get on a bus when you notice another passenger, someone else from your school, drops a \$10.00 bill on the ground. What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances?
Grade 3, 5 & 8	2. You are playing a game of soccer when one of the players begins to argue about a goal being allowed and starts pushing another of the players. Seeing this you get involved – What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances?
Grade 3	3. During class, the teacher is called away for a few moments to assist a student who is ill in the hallway. The students remaining in the classroom have work they are doing. A couple of students start to throw paper planes and erasers across the classroom. What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances?
Grade 5	3. You and your friends decide to start a “club”. No one else can join your club, in fact when someone else from your class asks to “hang out” with you at break time, you tell them you can’t because they aren’t in the “club.” When your classmate looks away tearfully, what do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances?
Grade 8	3. You are late for class again—and know that you will likely be given a detention if you don’t make it to school on time. On your way you come across another student who has just fallen off his or her bike and is crying, holding his or her knee. What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances?

*Note.* The first two vignettes are the same for students from all 3 target grades (3, 5, and 8). The third vignette was differentiated for each target grade.

The following outline describes each of the remaining student questionnaire sections (four) with the internal reliability coefficient for each. The questions follow a Likert-scale or rank-ordered multiple-choice style structure. The format for the Likert-scale questions changes in each section. Some follow a 1–5 scale where 1 is either *disagree a lot or never*, and 5 is *agree a lot or always*. In other sections participants choose from a scale of 1 to 3, 1 being *not true* and 3 being *very true*. In each of these sections there were questions that were reverse scored; otherwise the high score is considered the most positive. The rank-ordered multiple-choice questions were scored for levels of aggression and collaboration/cooperation.

### **Perception of classroom and school culture and climate**

Perception of classroom and school culture and climate was measured with three subscales and featured questions like, “In my class the teacher and students together plan what we will do.” The internal consistency reliability ( $\alpha$ ) of each of the components follows:

- Student influence in the classroom (4 items),  $\alpha = .59$
- Classroom supportiveness (4 items),  $\alpha = .41$
- Sense of school as a community (5 items),  $\alpha = .76$

### **General self-esteem and sense of autonomy**

Intrapersonal self-assessments had been modified to include two subscales, and included questions like, “I like myself just the way I am” and “I decide what I think is right, and then I do it.”

- General self-esteem (2 items),  $\alpha = .78$
- Sense of autonomy (5 items),  $\alpha = .49$

### **Interpersonal skills**

Interpersonal skills assessed student ability to generate solutions to interpersonal conflict, taking into account other points of view besides their own, and the nature of the outcome, whether it valued relations with others or instrumental gain. This component had two subscales:

- Social competence (5 items),  $\alpha = .51$
- Conflict resolution (3 items),  $\alpha = .83$

### **Social and moral orientations**

Social and moral orientations were measured using two scales that distinguish between motivation that is intrinsic and extrinsic in nature. Student willingness to compromise, ability to recognize responsibility to speak out against wrongs, feelings of concern, and desire to help others were the focus for these items:

- Intrinsic prosocial motivation,  $\alpha = .71$
- Extrinsic prosocial motivation,  $\alpha = .64$

Student responses to the three vignettes were incorporated within this section as part of student social and moral orientations and were used to explore student motivation/desire and beliefs/rationale for action.

The third phase of this study involved semistructured interviews with educators (Creswell, 2008) and was intended to gather additional insights into the knowledge, beliefs, and classroom practices of the educator participants related to character education. Using interviews with a qualitative analysis to expand upon or clarify data is especially warranted when the topic under consideration requires complicated analysis and interpretation (Cohen & Manion, 1981). Using a semistructured design, the



researcher is able to use open-ended questions, allowing the interviewee greater flexibility in responding, and can also insert probing questions as needed (Turner, 2010). In this study the interview material obtained from educator participants allowed for greater exploration and a richer description of educator beliefs and practices related to character education practices than would have been obtained with a single-method design.

The questions were developed to tap into the perspectives and practices of educators regarding each of the areas investigated through the student questionnaire: sense of classroom/school as a community, social/interpersonal skills, social/moral orientations, and an overall question about the climate of the classroom (see Appendix C for interview questions). Questions took the form of fact and opinion in order to explore knowledge, beliefs and practices. For example, when asking for details about how a sense of classroom/school community was developed, facts and beliefs were sought: “To help students feel that they belong and are cared for by others, please describe the educational strategies you implement in your classroom,” followed by, “What do you find most challenging about trying to establish this condition in your classroom?” and for a few questions additional prompts were prepared, “Do you encourage students to help one another? Do you create situations where students must work together to accomplish tasks?”

In conducting each of the interviews, the researcher welcomed the interviewee and thanked her for her willingness to participate. The researcher reiterated that their participation would be kept confidential. While some quotes would be used when writing up the results for this study, the interviewee would not be identified. Further, the

researcher reinforced with the interviewee that there was no evaluative element to these interviews. Interviewees were told of the overall structure and purpose of the interview and asked if they were in agreement that the interview would be recorded. Interviewees were provided with a copy of the questions to refer to during the interview. The researcher also took notes while conducting the interview and would rephrase or summarize the responses given by the interviewees frequently. If the interviewee asked a question for clarification or needed a question repeated, the researcher would oblige. At the conclusion of the interview the researcher again thanked the interviewee, asked her if she had any questions, and described the process for member checking that would be followed.

Three educator interviews were conducted. The interviews were recorded and transcribed by the researcher before being sent via email to the interviewee to confirm content of the interview. Following this process of member checking, each transcript was coded by the researcher to highlight ideas; for example, (Aut) was used to denote reference to autonomy in a response. Once all interviews were transcribed the researcher reread the transcripts and colour-coded ideas to indicate linkages between words or phrases identified as common themes. Each interview was also analyzed holistically.

This interview did involve educators sharing their practices with a researcher who is also an employee of the participating board of education. In securing ethics approval from the University Ethics Board and the Research Department of the participating school board, it was essential that educator participants not feel pressured to participate in this study because of the position held by the researcher. Specifically for the interview, it was necessary to reinforce with participants that there was no evaluative professional

performance component to this interview. At no time during the interview or debrief did an interviewee exercise her option to withdraw her transcript from this study. All interviews were scheduled at the discretion of the interviewee; some preferred to be off site from their school, while one preferred the convenience of her classroom during a preparation time block.

### **Administration of Student Questionnaire**

Following the introduction of the study to the target classrooms, the principal educator for each class collected consent forms and, through email correspondence between the researcher and principal educator, determined a suitable time for the researcher to return to the class to administer the questionnaire for student participants. In this correspondence the researcher also determined, with the assistance of the principal educator, if any participants would require assistance with written responses.

In each of the participating classrooms the modified version of the Child Development Project questionnaire was administered during regular instructional time. In preparation for administration and to aid with confidentiality, the researcher used a class list to assign each participating student a number. This was then written on their copy of the questionnaire by the researcher. On the day of administration, the researcher instructed the student participants about how the questionnaire would be administered, that they were not to write their names on the questionnaires, and that this was not going to count toward their report cards, so not to be worried about spelling or grammar, but that it was important that they tell the truth and answer to the best of their abilities. Students were also shown an example of Likert-scale type questions to assist in understanding how they would be responding to the questions asked. Nonparticipants

were either removed to another classroom with their principal educator or remained in the classroom (at their desks) with regularly assigned independent work from their teacher. Principal educators, if they remained in the classroom, continued to work with nonparticipant students.

Following these introductory remarks each of the five parts of the modified Child Development Project questionnaire was read aloud to the students by the researcher, allowing time for each child to record their response on their questionnaire booklet. The researcher walked throughout the classroom to observe the pace of student responses to help with this process. The researcher would at times reread a question if a student had fallen behind. The vignette questions were read aloud three times each before moving to the next question. Students were reminded by the researcher to check their work for completeness; did they have three parts to their answer? “What they would do,” “why,” and “would they ever choose to do something different.” Students who appeared to finish ahead of their peers were instructed to read over their questionnaires and ensure that all questions had been answered. When the researcher observed all students had finished writing, they were given the final instruction to review their questionnaire before handing it in to the researcher.

Once all questionnaires were collected, the researcher thanked the participants, and in a short debrief statement, indicated that their ideas were important to this research and that they would be receiving a summary of the study’s findings once it was completed. At this time the researcher also invited any questions students might have about the study or the researcher’s work in general. A letter of gratitude was given to each participant with the instruction to take it to their parents/guardians that evening, as it

was not possible for the researcher to thank them personally for allowing their child to participate in the study.

### **Data Analysis Outline**

Analyses of data collected occurred in three separate stages and are described in Chapter Four, beginning with quantitative findings. Findings are discussed collectively in Chapter Five. Analyses began with the educator questionnaire data (the first data collected), followed by analyses of the student questionnaire. Due to the lower than expected numbers of educators and the resulting weak statistical power, the analyses of the educator data set are limited to descriptive qualitative findings only and includes an individual item analysis for the UIC questionnaire. The student questionnaire data analyses include both descriptive and inferential statistics involving ANOVAs as well as correlational analyses. Finally, a qualitative examination of the three educator interviews, and the student vignette data was also conducted.

### **The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Moral Development and Education Questionnaire**

The first data collected were from educator participants using the modified UIC questionnaire. To begin, educator knowledge of moral development was calculated by totaling the correct scores to the 14 items in the first part of the modified UIC questionnaire to obtain a score for each educator participant. Similarly, to obtain a score for educator beliefs and sense of efficacy pertaining to character education, the second section of the UIC questionnaire was scored, excluding items 14, 16, 20, and 24, for a total of 28 items. Positively worded statements were scored from 5–1 with *Strongly Disagree* (SD = 1), *Disagree* (D = 2), *Uncertain* (U = 3), *Agree* (A = 4), and *Strongly*

*Agree* (SA = 5). Negatively worded statements in this section were reverse scored such that SD = 5 and SA = 1.

One of the goals of this study was to explore any relations between what educators know about moral development theory and their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education. Educator knowledge of theory, along with beliefs and sense of efficacy pertaining to character education were also explored descriptively, based on years teaching, setting, and grade taught for any differences. Individual educator responses to each questionnaire item were explored for any differences or trends based on number of years teaching, grade taught, and school setting. This data set was supplemented with educator interview material ( $n = 3$ ) and triangulated with student data to identify any patterns or differences.

Student and educator data are later discussed together to address the study's main purpose of, exploring educators' knowledge of moral development theory, their beliefs and sense of efficacy in delivering character education, and the socio-moral reasoning of student participants.

### **Modified Child Development Questionnaire**

Examination of the student data set formed the second stage of analyses, and involved scoring each of the four sections of the modified Child Development Project questionnaire separately. The first section, intended to measure perceptions about the class and school as a community, including their level of influence, were scored *Never* or *Disagree strongly* = 1, and *Always or Agree strongly* = 5, with reverse scored items being adjusted accordingly. The second section, intended to measure intra-personal skills includes seven items on personal sense of autonomy and self esteem. They were scored

*Never or Disagree strongly* = 1, and *Always or Agree strongly* = 5. The third section, inter-personal skills, explores social competence with five items scored *Disagree strongly* = 1, and *Agree strongly* = 5. Also within this section were three rank-ordered multiple-choice questions on conflict resolution, with responses scored 1 for most aggressive response to 5 for most compromising or collaborative. The fourth section, social/moral orientation, or inclination to help others, was measured separately as intrinsic motivation such as feelings of concern and empathy and extrinsic motivation such as rewards and punishments, on 12 items using the following scale:

*Not a reason* = 1, *small reason* = 2, and *big reason* = 3. In addition to these scales, the three vignettes were also considered part of the social/moral orientation scale, and were scored categorically.

First, descriptive statistics for each of the scales on the questionnaire (these are dependent variables) were completed for all student participants ( $N = 68$ ). Next, 2 x 3 ANOVAs were conducted to explore for any interactions between gender and Grade (3, 5, and 8). While there were significant main effects, there were no significant interactions noted, thus, no further tests for interactions were performed. One-way ANOVAs were completed to explore for difference on each of the scales for grade and gender variables. Finally, differences in responses to the student questionnaire scales (dependent variables), were explored for each class using 1 x 7 ANOVA tests. Significant findings did result from these analyses.

Pearson correlations, using the nine scales of the student questionnaire, were conducted. Further Pearson correlations were used to identify any differences in the scales that were correlated within each of the independent variables: grade and gender.

This information is further supplemented with descriptive data from the educator interviews and the student vignettes.

### **Educator Interviews and Student Vignettes**

The final stage of analysis involved the coding of educator interview transcripts and analysis of students' responses to the social vignettes. The three educator participants were each given a pseudonym and the content of each interview was analyzed separately. Common words and phrases were categorized for a thematic analysis across the three interviews. Preliminary analysis of student responses to the first two vignettes was conducted to identify the frequency of students' responses that prioritized one domain over another or coordinated domains (moral or social convention) and indicated instrumental, relational, or a combined motivation. Students' responses to all three vignettes were further analyzed to identify common words or phrases. Through this process themes were named and used to identify any differences or similarities based on grade or gender.

One of the challenges with open-ended interview structure is the potential variability in responses (Turner, 2010). To begin, the structure of interview questions followed a thematic design, aligned with the student questionnaire. For example, questions 1 through 4 were intended to explore educator practices and/or beliefs related to an overall theme of classroom/school community. Once each interview was completed the researcher reread the transcribed responses and added jot notes to the margins to identify common words, phrases or ideas. For example, (C) was used to indicate reference to the practice of "collaboration" and (Aut) to indicate "autonomy." Once all interviews were completed, these phrases were then colour coded to identify consistency



among responses and labeled thematically. The following four-part outline illustrates the codes and the themes that were identified in analyzing the educator responses to the semistructured interview.

Questions 1 through 4, sense of community focus (overall theme):

- Collaboration (C)
- Maintaining dignity (D)
- Community (Comm)
- Student Aptitudes (SA)
- Respect (R)
- Student autonomy (Aut)
- Teachable moments (TM)
- Time (T)
- Expectations (Exp)
- Safety for risk-taking (Risk)

Questions 5 and 6, social/interpersonal skills focus (overall theme):

- Role modeling (RM)
- Competency (CP)
- Genuine concern for others (Concern)
- Modeling/support (M/S)
- Progressive steps (Pr)

Questions 7 and 8, social/moral orientations focus (overall theme):

- Value in the work (V)
- Reality/experience based (R/E)
- Empathy/understanding (E/U)
- Lack of preparation for the task (L/Prep)

Question 9, confirmation of student conflict resolution focus (overall theme):

- Skillset variability (SV)
- Timely response (TR)
- Confidence (Conf)

To further enrich these data, each educator interview was explored separately, taking into account grade taught, years teaching and school setting, to capture the essence of the knowledge, beliefs and practices of the individual educators. These data were then

triangulated with questionnaire data from students to provide a more complete picture of the specific learning environment. These descriptive data were intended clarify educator data obtained from the UIC questionnaire and enhance student questionnaire data.

The three social vignettes were open-response opportunities for students to indicate the beliefs and desires they employ when faced with complex social situations. Student responses to these scenarios were coded by the researcher and then interpreted in two ways: first for motivation for action (desire), to identify whether students act for the sake of relationships, instrumental/personal gain, a combination of the two, or for some other reason; second, to identify the rationale students used (beliefs) to govern their decisions, whether students used a social convention (a rule), a moral principle (justice, or harm), a combination of the two, or some other rationale to explain why they chose a specific action.

Student responses to the three open response vignette scenarios in the socio-moral section were intended to evaluate desire/motivation for action as:

1. self-interest (instrumental gain) or
2. concern for others (relational gain), and

belief/rationale for action as, either:

1. a social convention (rule) exists or
2. it is morally right/wrong, using principles of justice or human welfare.

Given that these responses were original and unique (students didn't choose from preselected options), a coding system and rubric was developed. Student responses were coded as categorical variables using the following number code system: instrumental motivation, (1) relational motivation, (2) combined motivation, (3) and, other (4) for

desire/motivation. For belief/rationale for action, the following categorical codes were applied: social/authority rationale, (1) moral rationale, (2), a coordination of both social and moral components, (3) and, other (4). Using these number codes and an accompanying rubric (see Appendix D), student responses were analysed by the researcher. An independent inter-rater checked 20% of the responses (see Appendix E). Reliability between the researcher and interrater for student beliefs was 86% and 87% for student desires. Discrepancies were discussed and, using the rubric, consensus was reached.

The beliefs/rationale and desire/motivation of students as described above were explored descriptively using a tally count method to tabulate frequencies and percentages and identify any trends or differences in students' responses using grade and gender variables. Additionally students' responses were considered thematically through the identification of common words or phrases and were used to illustrate any trends or differences of note.

Results from each of the above analyses are described in Chapter Four, beginning with the quantitative findings from this mixed-method investigation, followed by a discussion of the findings, which are presented in Chapter Five.

## **CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS**

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the results from the analyses performed in the current investigation. These results are reported in two separate sections. The first section describes the quantitative results from ANOVA tests and correlational analyses. The second section is qualitative in nature and describes the results obtained from the educator participants on the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Moral Development and Education Questionnaire. These descriptive statistics are followed by results obtained through individual semi-structured interviews with three educators, as well as the student vignette responses. The chapter concludes with a summary of findings before moving to Chapter Five for the discussion.

### **Quantitative Results**

This section covers results obtained from the student participants using the modified Child Development Project Questionnaire. There are both descriptive and inferential statistics incorporated within this section.

#### **Student Participants: Descriptive Statistics**

The modified Child Development Project questionnaire is divided into four separate sections with nine scales. The first six scales are in the format of Likert-scale type questions or rank-ordered multiple-choice questions. The Likert-scale type scores range from 1 to 5 (5 being a high positive value score), unless the question is reverse scored. The seventh scale, the multiple-choice questions, were scored for degree of aggression or compromise and collaboration, such that 1 was rated *most aggressive*, and 5 *most compromising or collaborative*. The eighth scale used a 1 to 3 Likert-scale format. The ninth scale used a 1 to 5 scale. These last two scales measured social and moral

orientations. Social/moral orientations were scored as a ratio of intrinsic motivation rationale to extrinsic motivation rationale (a higher number is indicative of greater intrinsic motivation) as well as being considered separately. A brief description of the scales from the student questionnaire is provided below.

**Influence.** Influence describes the degree to which students believe and feel they contribute to the decision-making in their classroom.

**Supportiveness.** Supportiveness describes the extent to which students believe and feel their classmates are concerned for one another.

**Sense of school community.** Sense of school community describes the extent to which students believe and feel their school community is welcoming, safe, and supportive.

**Self-esteem.** The self-esteem scale describes students' general self-esteem.

**Autonomy.** Autonomy describes student beliefs and feelings about being able to make decisions for themselves that affect them.

**Social competence.** Social competence describes, from the students' own perspective, their interpersonal skills.

**Conflict resolution.** Conflict resolution describes student ability to resolve interpersonal conflicts, taking into account the perspectives and needs of all concerned.

**Social/moral orientation.** The socio/moral orientation scales describe student abilities to act pro-socially out of concern for others, and feelings of empathy, rather than for external rewards. Scales include **intrinsic** and **extrinsic**, as well as a ratio score of intrinsic to extrinsic motivation. A higher score indicates greater intrinsic motivation. A score of 3.0 would indicate the highest level of intrinsic motivation possible, and a score of 1.0 would indicate the lowest level using this scale. Tables 3, 4, and 5 provide an overview of the descriptive statistics for each of the scales and the ratio score for intrinsic to

extrinsic motivation. Also included as part of the social/moral orientation scales are three social vignettes. Analysis of the vignette data was performed qualitatively and is reported separately. Findings from these qualitative analyses are discussed in relation to the quantitative data in the following chapter.

### **Student Participants: ANOVAs**

Participants' mean scores for all nine student questionnaire scales were explored and results are presented on Table 3, Table 4, and Table 5. Autonomy, influence, self-esteem, supportiveness, sense of school community, social competence, conflict resolution, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, and the index of intrinsic and extrinsic responses were explored based on grade and gender. These scales each captured elements of student beliefs and desire to act prosocially. For example, questions from the social competence scale included: "I'm very good at working with other children" and "I'm good at finding fair ways to solve problems." Questions from the conflict resolution scale included: "Suppose you put your pencil down for a minute and a boy in your class comes along and takes it. You ask him to give it back, but he says "no." What would you do next? What if what you just picked didn't work? What would you do then?" The intrinsic motivation scale included questions such as: "When you help another student in this class, why do you usually do it?" Beliefs and desires are explored further, separately in the qualitative analysis of this study.

Table 3

*Mean Scores for Six Scales from the Modified Child Development Project Questionnaire*

Scale	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Influence	68	2.53	.80
Support	68	3.78	.69
Schoolcom	68	3.75	.73
Self esteem	68	4.35	.94
Autonomy	68	2.32	.37
Social/Com	68	4.14	.57

*Note.* These six scales follow a Likert scale format and are from the modified Child Development Project Questionnaire: Influence = Influence; Support = Supportiveness; Schoolcom = Sense of school community; Self esteem = Self esteem; Autonomy = Autonomy; Social/Com = Social competence. Higher mean scores indicate positive results for the scales, with 5 being the highest and 1 being the lowest level.

Table 4

*Mean Score for Multiple Choice Scale from the Modified Child Development Project*

*Questionnaire*

Scale	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Conflict/Res	68	3.9	.67

*Note.* This scale from the modified Child Development Project was analyzed with a scale of 1–5 for degree of aggression and/or collaboration, with 1 being most aggressive and 5 most collaborative. Conflict/Res = Conflict resolution.



Table 5

*Intrinsic and Extrinsic Mean Scores with Index Ratio*

Scale	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Intrinsic	68	2.47	.37
Extrinsic	68	1.91	.47

*Note.* Intrinsic = Intrinsic motivation; Extrinsic = Extrinsic motivation. A mean score of 3 is the highest level using this scale, with a score of 1 being the lowest. Socio-moral orientation is also measured with a ratio of intrinsic to extrinsic motivation;  $N = 68$ , (2.29, .062 *SD*).

2 (gender) x 3 (grade) ANOVA tests were performed to explore for any interaction between gender and grade for each of the student questionnaire scales. While there were significant main effects there were no significant interactions for any of the scales. Beginning with the influence scale, a significant main effect for grade  $F(2, 67) = 15.51, p < .001$  was noted, but no significant interaction  $F(2, 67) = .31, p = .736$ . The intrinsic motivation scale had a significant main effect for grade  $F(2, 67) = 5.7, p = .005$ , but no significant interaction,  $F(2, 67) = .34, p = .71$ , and the extrinsic motivation scale had a significant main effect for grade  $F(2, 67) = 9.27, p < .001$ , but no significant interaction  $F(2, 67) = 3.02, p = .06$ . The supportiveness  $F(2, 67) = .206, p = .82$ , school community  $F(2, 67) = .526, p = .59$ , self esteem  $F(2, 67) = 1.77, p = .18$ , autonomy  $F(2, 67) = .311, p = .73$ , social competence  $F(2, 67) = 3.17, p = .05$ , and conflict resolution  $F(2, 67) = 2.29, p = .11$  scales did not have significant main effects. Given there were no significant interactions noted where main effects were identified, no follow up tests related to interaction were conducted. One-way ANOVAs for grade and gender were used to explore for any differences on the social competence, conflict resolution, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivation scales as they were particularly relevant to beliefs and desire to act prosocially.

**Main effects based on grade.** Results of one-way ANOVAs for grade indicated statistically significant results for both the intrinsic,  $F(2, 67) = 6.17, p = .004, p < .01$  and extrinsic scales,  $F(2, 67) = 9.2, p = .000, p < .01$ . Results for the social competence scale,  $F(2, 67) = 2.70, p = .075$ , and conflict resolution scale,  $F(2, 67) = .203, p = .817$  were not statistically significant. Conducting Post Hoc tests indicated that a significant difference for intrinsic motivation exists between Grades 3 and 8, using Tukey HSD = .005, and that for extrinsic motivation, significant differences exist between Grade 3 and both Grades 5 and 8,

using Tukey HSD = .009 and .000 respectively. In exploring these data further, Grade 3 students were found to have the smallest difference between intrinsic ( $M = 2.63$ ) and extrinsic motivation ( $M = 2.17$ ) to act prosocially. The largest difference exists for Grade 8 students with intrinsic motivation ( $M = 2.26$ ) and extrinsic motivation ( $M = 1.63$ ), suggesting they are more likely to be intrinsically motivated to act prosocially than the Grade 3 student participants. It is also noteworthy that Grade 8 students in general appear to have the lowest levels of motivation of all three grades, intrinsic and extrinsic. See Table 6.

**Main effects based on gender.** There were no significant differences noted between males and females in their beliefs and desire using the scales presented on Table 7 when tested through a one-way ANOVA.

Finally, 1 x 7 ANOVAs were conducted to explore for differences among the classes on each of the scales and revealed some significant main effects. For the influence scale, a significant main effect,  $F(6, 67) = 6.04, p < .001$  was identified. Post Hoc analysis revealed significant differences between the Grade 8 students in the rural setting, the Grade 3 students in the suburban setting,  $p = .014$ , and the Grade 3 students of the rural setting,  $p = .002$ . The sense of school community scale had a significant main effect,  $F(6, 67) = 1.13, p = .04$  however no significant differences were noted through a Post Hoc analysis. The intrinsic motivation scale had a significant main effect,  $F(6, 67) = 2.35, p = .04$ . Post Hoc analysis indicated a significant difference between the Grade 8 and Grade 3 classes in the rural setting,  $p = .04$ . The extrinsic motivation scale also had a significant main effect,  $F(6, 67) = 3.52, p = .005$  and Post Hoc analysis revealed significant differences between the Grade 3 class in the urban setting with the suburban Grade 8 class  $p = .03$ , and the rural Grade 8 class  $p = .008$ .

Table 6

*Mean Scores: Social competence, Conflict Resolution, Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation by Grade*

Scale	Grade	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Social competence	3	26	4.18	.60
	5	24	4.28	.50
	8	18	3.89	.55
Conflict resolution	3	26	3.92	.47
	5	24	3.84	.84
	8	18	3.98	.67
Intrinsic motivation	3	24 <sup>a</sup>	2.63**	.30
	5	24	2.44	.42
	8	18	2.26	.31
Extrinsic motivation	3	24 <sup>a</sup>	2.17**	.55
	5	24	1.84	.35
	8	18	1.63	.30
Total		66 <sup>a</sup>		

*Note.* Social competence uses a scale of 1–5, with 1 being low and 5 being high. Conflict resolution uses a scale of 1–5, with 1 being low on aggression and 5 being high. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivation each use a scale of 1–3, with 1 being low and 3 being high.

<sup>a</sup> Missing data from Grade 3 participant.

\*\* Significant at the  $p < .01$  level.

Table 7

*Mean Scores: Social Competence, Conflict Resolution, Intrinsic and Extrinsic Motivation by Gender*

Variable	Total ( <i>N</i> = 68)	Female ( <i>n</i> = 34)	Male ( <i>n</i> = 34)
Soc/Com	4.14	4.14	4.14
SD	.57	.60	.54
Conflict/Res	3.90	3.93	3.88
SD	.67	.66	.69
Intrinsic	2.47	2.44	2.50
SD	.37	.40	.36
Missing	2	1	1
Extrinsic	1.91	1.90	1.93
SD	.47	.55	.40
Missing	2	2	

*Note.* Social/Com = social competence; Conflict/Res = conflict resolution; Intrinsic = intrinsic motivation; Extrinsic = extrinsic motivation. Soc/Moral Rating: *N* (68) = 2.29, (Female = 2.28, Male = 2.30).

The supportiveness scale,  $F(6, 67) = 2.25, p = .051$ , self esteem scale,  $F(6, 67) = 1.28, p = .28$ , autonomy scale,  $F(6, 67) = 1.01, p = .43$ , social competence scale,  $F(6, 67) = 1.01, p = .43$ , and conflict resolution scale  $F(6, 67) = .660, p = .682$  revealed no significant main effect. No further analysis was conducted on these scales for individual classes. All Post Hoc analyses for these ANOVAs were conducted with Bonferroni correction.

A comparison of mean scores for the autonomy and influence scales was made for descriptive purposes by grade/class and gender to identify any differences within these variables on each of these scales. These scales were thought to be of some relevance when exploring levels of relational motivation. The autonomy scale describes students' feelings about being able to make decisions for themselves that affect them, where the influence scale describes student feelings about how much influence they have in decisions made in their classroom. Of note, the grade with the highest level of autonomy is the Grade 8 group ( $M = 2.48$ ), compared to Grade 5, ( $M = 2.26$ ) and Grade 3 ( $M = 2.26$ ). Grade 8 students had the highest level of influence ( $M = 3.21$ ), compared to Grade 5, ( $M = 2.54$ ) and Grade 3 students ( $M = 2.05$ ). Female students led in their reported level of autonomy ( $M = 2.36$ ) and influence ( $M = 2.65$ ) compared to autonomy ( $M = 2.28$ ) and influence ( $M = 2.41$ ) of male students.

Considering the autonomy and influence data at the classroom level provides further details about variance. The class with the highest level of autonomy described was the Grade 8 class from the rural setting ( $M = 2.49$ ) and the lowest level described was in the Grade 3 class from the urban setting. Influence showed a similar pattern, with the Grade 8 class from the rural setting having the highest level of influence ( $M = 3.17$ ) and the lowest level of influence is again in a Grade 3 class, however, it is a suburban class ( $M = 1.58$ ). These variables were further explored in the correlational analyses.

### **Student Participants: Correlational Analyses**

To explore the relations between educators' knowledge and practice regarding character education and students' socio-moral reasoning, the original plan was to correlate educators' responses with students' responses. However given that the numbers of educator and student participants were insufficient to obtain statistical power, alternate analysis plans were followed. That is, data were explored for correlations among the nine scales from the student questionnaire. These correlations were performed with Pearson product-moment correlations.

Conducting correlational analyses with the nine scales of the student questionnaire indicated a number of significant Pearson correlations (see Table 8) for the entire student sample ( $N = 68$ ). Among the significant correlations were the following: (a) influence was found to be negatively correlated with extrinsic motivation,  $r = -.29$ ,  $p = .015$ ,  $p < .05$ , (b) supportiveness was positively correlated with sense of school community,  $r = .55$ ,  $p < .001$ , autonomy,  $r = .30$ ,  $p = .014$ , and social competence,  $r = .32$ ,  $p = .007$ , (c) school community was also positively correlated with social competence,  $r = .40$ ,  $p = .001$ , conflict resolution,  $r = .28$ ,  $p = .019$ , and intrinsic motivation,  $r = .33$ ,  $p = .006$ , and finally, (d) intrinsic motivation was positively correlated with sense of school community,  $r = .33$ ,  $p = .006$ , social competence,  $r = .39$ ,  $p = .001$ , and extrinsic motivation,  $r = .32$ ,  $p = .007$ . See Table 8 for a correlation matrix of the nine student scales. These scales were further explored for any gender and grade differences in correlations. All correlations were conducted with two-tailed significance levels.

Student scales were tested separately for male and female participants to identify correlations and revealed some differences by gender (see Table 9). Significant positive relations were found between supportiveness and sense of school community for female and

male students. For females, supportiveness was also related to autonomy  $r = .38, p = .026$ , whereas for the males it was related to social competence,  $r = .36, p = .035$ . To test for any significant differences, Fisher Z scores were conducted and indicated a significant difference between female and male participants regarding the relation between supportiveness and sense of school community,  $z = 1.966, p = <.05$  (two tailed). For females this correlation was significantly stronger than for males. The Fisher Z score between social competence and sense of school community was not significant,  $z = -.438$ . Further, only the females had a negative correlation. The relation between influence and extrinsic motivation was negative,  $r = -.35, p = .045$ , indicating that as the influence scale is increased, the extrinsic motivation levels are decreased. See Table 9 for a full comparison of significant findings, with statistical values.

Pearson correlations for participants within each grade level were conducted to explore for any differences in significant correlations. Findings did reveal some variances in the variables correlated (See Table 10). For example, both Grade 3 and 5 students' responses indicated a positive relationship between the level of supportiveness they report and their sense of school community. For Grade 3 participants the correlation is  $r = .40, p = .045$  and for Grade 5 it is  $r = .75, p = <.001$ . The difference between these correlations was not significant using Fisher's Z score test,  $z = -1.81$ , two-tailed. For Grade 8 students, supportiveness,  $r = .48, p = .042$ , sense of school community,  $r = .53, p = .025$ , and influence,  $r = .52, p = .029$ , are all related to their social competence. Finally, a negative relationship between social competence and extrinsic motivation ( $r = -.41, p = .046$ ), identified for the Grade 5 participants only may be reflective of some developmental changes in motivation.



Table 8

*Student Questionnaire Scales Pearson Correlations (r)*

Scale		Influence	Supportive	School community	Self-esteem	Autonomy	Social competence	Conflict res	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
<i>N</i> = 68										
Influence	<i>r</i>	1.00	-.031	-.018	-.079	.110	.032	.191	-.159	-.294*
	Sig.		.803	.885	.523	.372	.796	.119	.196	.015
Supportive	<i>r</i>	-	1.00	.545**	-.114	.298*	.327**	.158	.194	.065
	Sig.	-		.000	.354	.014	.007	.199	.113	.601
School community	<i>r</i>	-	-	1.00	.022	.042	.398**	.284*	.332**	.056
	Sig.	-	-		.860	.733	.001	.019	.006	.651
Self-esteem	<i>r</i>	-	-	-	1.00	-.044	.055	.114	.146	.035
	Sig.	-	-	-		.720	.654	.354	.234	.779
Autonomy	<i>r</i>	-	-	-	-	1.00	.095	.123	-.037	-.365**
	Sig.	-	-	-	-		.440	.316	.767	.002
Social competence	<i>r</i>	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	.238	.393**	-.035
	Sig.	-	-	-	-	-		.051	.001	.776
Conflict res	<i>r</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	.093	-.111
	Sig.	-	-	-	-	-	-		.449	.369
Intrinsic	<i>r</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00	.324**
	Sig.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		.007
Extrinsic	<i>r</i>	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1.00
	Sig.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

*Note.* Influence = Influence; Support = Supportiveness; School comm = sense of school community; Self esteem = self esteem; Autonomy = Autonomy; Social/Com = social competence; Conflict res = conflict resolution; Intrinsic = intrinsic motivation; Extrinsic = extrinsic motivation.

\*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed)

\*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed)

Table 9

*Comparison of Significant Pearson Correlations (r) in Student Scales for Female and Male Participants*

		Female n = 34								
Scale		Influence	Supportive	School community	Self-esteem	Autonomy	Social competence	Conflict resolution	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Influence	r Sig.	1 .	-.025 .890	-.085 .633	-.079 .656	.140 .429	.230 .190	.116 .514	-.221 .209	-.346* .045
Supportive	r Sig.	- .	1 .	.743** .000	-.135 .445	.381* .026	.297 .088	.190 .282	.146 .410	.153 .388
School community	r Sig.	- .	- .	1 .	-.110 .535	.353* .040	.357* .038	.348* .044	.181 .305	.010 .957
Self-esteem	r Sig.	- .	- .	- .	1 .	-.120 .498	.113 .524	.055 .758	.189 .286	-.014 .939
Autonomy	r Sig.	- .	- .	- .	- .	1 .	.059 .741	.121 .495	-.184 .297	-.426* .012
Social competence	r Sig.	- .	- .	- .	- .	- .	1 .	.494** .003	.418* .014	-.080 .652
Conflict resolution	r Sig.	- .	- .	- .	- .	- .	- .	1 .	.208 .238	-.063 .725
Intrinsic	r Sig.	- .	- .	- .	- .	- .	- .	- .	1 .	.391* .022
Extrinsic	r Sig.	- .	- .	- .	- .	- .	- .	- .	- .	1 .

(table continues)

Male n = 34										
Scale		Influence	Supportive	School community	Self-esteem	Autonomy	Social competence	Conflict res	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Influence	r	1	-.059	.076	.063	.029	-.223	.267	-.059	-.209
	Sig.		.739	.669	.722	.870	.204	.127	.739	.235
Supportive	r	-	1	.412*	-.081	.179	.362*	.122	.262	-.059
	Sig.	-		.016	.647	.312	.035	.494	.135	.738
School community	r	-	-	1	.141	-.246	.450**	.248	.466**	.105
	Sig.	-	-		.425	.160	.008	.157	.005	.554
Self-esteem	r	-	-	-	1	.085	-.021	.189	.083	.112
	Sig.	-	-	-		.634	.904	.285	.642	.529
Autonomy	r	-	-	-	-	1	.147	.121	.189	-.255
	Sig.	-	-	-	-		.408	.497	.283	.146
Social competence	r	-	-	-	-	-	1	-.030	.366**	.034
	Sig.	-	-	-	-	-		.867	.033	.851
Conflict resolution	r	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-.021	-.176
	Sig.	-	-	-	-	-	-		.908	.320
Intrinsic	r	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.222
	Sig.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-		.207
Extrinsic	r	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
	Sig.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

*Note.* \*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). \*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Table 10

*Comparison of Significant Pearson Correlations (r) in Student Scales for Grade*

		Grade 3 n = 26								
Scale		Influence	Supportive	School community	Self-esteem	Autonomy	Social competence	Conflict res	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Influence	r Sig.	1	-.172 .400	-.333 .097	.115 .575	-.287 .155	-.097 .637	-.045 .827	-.359 .072	.165 .422
Supportive	r Sig.	-	1	.397* .045	-.242 .234	.489* .011	.297 .140	-.010 .962	.088 .688	.035 .866
School community	r Sig.	-	-	1	-.072 .728	.207 .309	.326 .104	.244 .230	.307 .127	-.013 .951
Self-esteem	r Sig.	-	-	-	1	-.198 .332	-.040 .846	-.116 .571	.034 .867	-.014 .945
Autonomy	r Sig.	-	-	-	-	1	.256 .207	.190 .353	-.305 .129	-.372 .061
Social competence	r Sig.	-	-	-	-	-	1	-.222 .276	.177 .388	-.044 .831
Conflict resolution	r Sig.	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	-.194 .342	.002 .992
Intrinsic	r Sig.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	.228 .263
Extrinsic	r Sig.	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1

(table continues)

Grade 5 n = 24										
Scale		Influence	Supportive	School community	Self-esteem	Autonomy	Social competence	Conflict res	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Influence	r Sig.	1	.118 .584	.353 .090	.088 .683	.174 .415	.332 .113	.392 .058	.406* .049	-.338 .107
Supportive	r Sig.	- -	1	.747** .000	.163 .447	.182 .395	.404 .050	.277 .190	.181 .398	.079 .713
School community	r Sig.	- -	- -	1	.079 .712	.053 .805	.363 .082	.272 .199	.309 .142	-.097 .651
Self-esteem	r Sig.	- -	- -	- -	1	.250 .240	.353 .091	.615** .001	.384 .064	-.087 .685
Autonomy	r Sig.	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	.205 .337	.263 .214	.451* .027	-.262 .216
Social competence	r Sig.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	.578* .003	.528** .008	-.411* .046
Conflict resolution	r Sig.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	.183 .391	-.397 .055
Intrinsic	r Sig.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	-.014 .948
Extrinsic	r Sig.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1

(table continues)

Grade 8 <i>n</i> = 18										
Scale		Influence	Supportive	School community	Self-esteem	Autonomy	Social competence	Conflict res	Intrinsic	Extrinsic
Influence	<i>r</i> Sig.	1	.345 .161	.376 .124	-.420 .082	.198 .431	.515* .029	.151 .550	.124 .623	-.085 .737
Supportive	<i>r</i> Sig.	- -	1	.368 .133	-.104 .681	.102 .688	.484* .042	.094 .710	.293 .238	-.335 .174
School community	<i>r</i> Sig.	- -	- -	1	.017 .947	-.108 .671	.526* .025	.434 .072	.201 .425	.028 .914
Self-esteem	<i>r</i> Sig.	- -	- -	- -	1	.366 .135	-.231 .357	-.029 .909	-.019 .941	.132 .602
Autonomy	<i>r</i> Sig.	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	-.112 .659	-.519* .027	-.252 .314	-.249 .320
Social competence	<i>r</i> Sig.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	.400 .100	.426 .078	.033 .897
Conflict resolution	<i>r</i> Sig.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	.260 .297	.132 .601
Intrinsic	<i>r</i> Sig.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1	.472* .048
Extrinsic	<i>r</i> Sig.	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	- -	1

*Note.* \*Correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed). \*\*Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).

To summarize, 2 x 3 ANOVAs did have significant main effects for grade on the influence, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivation scales. There were no significant interactions between gender and the three grades for any of the scales. 1 x 7 ANOVAs indicated significant differences among classes for the sense of school community, influence, intrinsic and extrinsic motivation scales. Students in the Grade 8 rural setting differed significantly from students in the Grade 3 suburban setting on the influence scale. Significant differences were noted between the Grade 8 and Grade 3 classes of the rural setting on the intrinsic motivation scale. Finally, the Grade 3 class of the urban setting differed significantly from both Grade 8 classes on the extrinsic motivation scale. Post Hoc analysis indicated students in the urban Grade 3 class had the highest level of extrinsic motivation ( $M = 2.33$ ) compared with the Grade 8 suburban class ( $M = 1.67$ ) and the rural Grade 8 class ( $M = 1.59$ ).

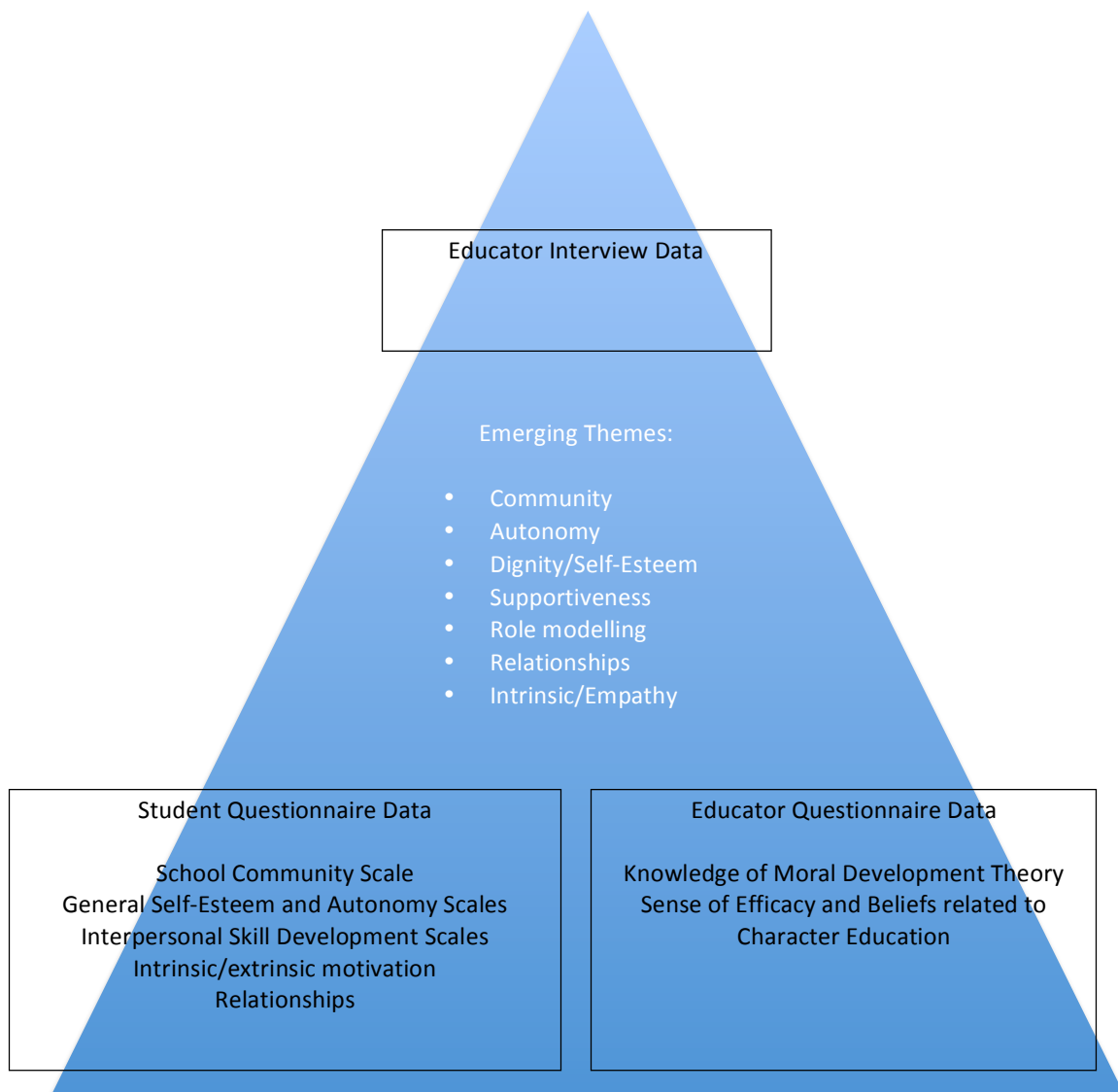
A pattern was also noted for mean scores from the autonomy and influence scales. The Grade 8 class from the rural setting had the highest level of autonomy ( $M = 2.49$ ) and the lowest level was in a Grade 3 class from the urban setting. Influence showed a similar pattern, again with the Grade 8 class from the rural setting having the highest level of influence ( $M = 3.17$ ) and the lowest level of influence is again in a Grade 3 class, however, it is a suburban class ( $M = 1.58$ ) for this scale.

Summarizing correlation data, a number of statistically significant correlations between subscales on the student questionnaire are apparent. Of note, there is a negative relationship between influence and extrinsic motivation. Sense of school community is positively correlated with social competence, conflict resolution, and intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is positively correlated with sense of school community, social competence, and extrinsic motivation.

Examination of these correlations within the variables: grade and gender indicate further significant relations. Both female and male participant data indicate a positive correlation between supportiveness and sense of school community; however for female students autonomy is also positively related. The strength of the correlation found for female students is significantly stronger than for males based on Fisher Z scores. Female students also had a significant negative correlation between influence and extrinsic motivation. Finally, differences in correlations among the target grades are noted. A positive relation for supportiveness, sense of school community, and influence, with social competence was found for Grade 8 students only. Grade 5 students had the only noteworthy negative correlation between social competence and extrinsic motivation.

To further expand on quantitative findings, the interview material exploring educator pedagogy: the knowledge, beliefs, and practices of educators were considered. Educator interviews were conducted with three educator participants, from the urban (teacher of Grade 3) and rural settings (teachers of Grade 3 and 8). A visual overview of the data triangulation, the emerging commonalities from quantitative data (obtained from student questionnaires), and qualitative data (from student vignettes, educator questionnaire and interviews), is presented in Figure 1. The common themes presented are those where statistically significant findings were obtained for student scales (representing desire and belief aspects of socio-moral reasoning) and that align with the descriptive findings from the student vignettes, the educator questionnaire descriptive statistics, and narrative data obtained from the educator interviews. Qualitative findings for student vignette data and educator questionnaire data/interviews follow.





*Figure 1.* Data triangulation: A visual representation.

## **Qualitative Results**

This study was designed to yield both quantitative and qualitative data. This section begins with an outline of the qualitative findings obtained from the student participants through their vignette responses. Following, is a report of the descriptive analysis of the modified UIC questionnaire completed by the educators along with the results of the semistructured interviews conducted with three of the educators.

### **Student Participants: Vignette Data**

The final section of the modified Child Development Project Questionnaire, part of the social/moral orientation scales, consists of three social vignettes. Student responses to these scenarios were coded and then interpreted in two ways, first for motivation for action (desire), to identify whether students act for the sake of relationships, instrumental/personal gain, a combination of the two, or for some other reason. Second was to identify the rationale students used (beliefs) to govern their decisions, whether students used a social convention (a rule), a moral principle (justice, or harm), a combination of the two, or some other rationale.

Once coded using the scoring rubric (See Appendix D) student responses were tallied. Results are reported as frequencies and percentages for each vignette. Table 11 reports the overall findings for motivation and rationale for action for student participants ( $N= 68$ ) on each vignette. Further content analysis was completed through the identification of common phrases or words from student responses and resulted in themes being identified. These themes provide further support for the categorical analysis. These themes are illustrated using quotes from student responses and are presented in a narrative format in the sections that follow. For investigative purposes Vignettes 1 and 2 were analyzed and compared across grade and gender, as they were standardized vignettes for

all three grades. The third vignette was written with a unique scenario for each grade with the intent of making comparisons across settings and by gender. However since not all grades are represented in each setting, these comparisons were not made; thus these data were considered separately.

Coding student responses for *desire*, conducted by the researcher and independent interrater, used the following codes and criteria (see Appendix D for exact coding rubric):

(1) Instrumental gain. The response referred to some form of profit or personal gain for the student participant (e.g., physical, social–emotional, monetary). For example, a student response to the second vignette: “I would have held them back and restrained them unless I would get suspended.” In this instance the student is qualifying the conditions under which he or she would help a peer—only if it means he or she would not get in trouble.

(2) Relational gain. The response refers to concern for another. For example, a student response to the third vignette: “I would let them in the club because you [gotta] think about the other person.”

(3) A combination of instrumental and relational gain. The response incorporates both, opportunity to gain (or avoid harm) and show concern for others. For example, a student response to vignette two, “Tell everyone to calm down and say, it’s just a game, because someone could get hurt and I could too.”

(4) Other. The response does not conform to either relational or instrumental gain. For example, a student response to vignette two, “I would go inside and get a teacher because I wouldn’t know what to do.”

Coding student responses for *beliefs*, again conducted by the researcher and an independent interrater, employed the following codes and criteria: (1) Social/authority. The response indicated the existence of a rule or a person of authority as a priority. For

example, a response to the second vignette from a student in Grade 3, “I would say ‘foul’ like pushing, to the teacher so they would sit out for part of the game because they are not playing the game right.” (2) Moral. The student refers to human welfare or justice/fairness in his/her response. For example, a Grade 3 student’s response to vignette two, “I would help them because no one would want to see someone getting hurt.” (3) A coordination of both a social convention (rule/authority) and a moral principle (human welfare, justice/fairness) are referred to in their response. For example, a Grade 5 student’s response to vignette three, “ I would say sorry and talk to my friends about letting them in. If it was an all girls club and a boy asked to play I will say no because it is an all girls’ club.” (4) Other, where the student response cannot be identified as either a rule/authority or moral principle.

As this evaluation of responses was subjective in nature, the researcher attempted to confirm interpretation by repeating the processes for coding on more than one occasion as well as having an independent interrater evaluate a sample (approximately 20%),  $n = 15$ . When the analyses and coding were compared there was 86% agreement between an independent interrater and the researcher on beliefs (whether students are using moral principles, social conventions, a combination, or some other understanding) to make their decisions. Coding for desires there was 87% agreement between the researcher and interrater. In instances where the interrater and researcher coded responses differently, consensus was reached through discussion. This process allowed the researcher and interrater to share the interpretive rationale for the code assigned while remaining true to the scoring rubric.

Table 11

*Student Responses to Social Vignettes: Motivation (Desire) and Rationale (Beliefs),*

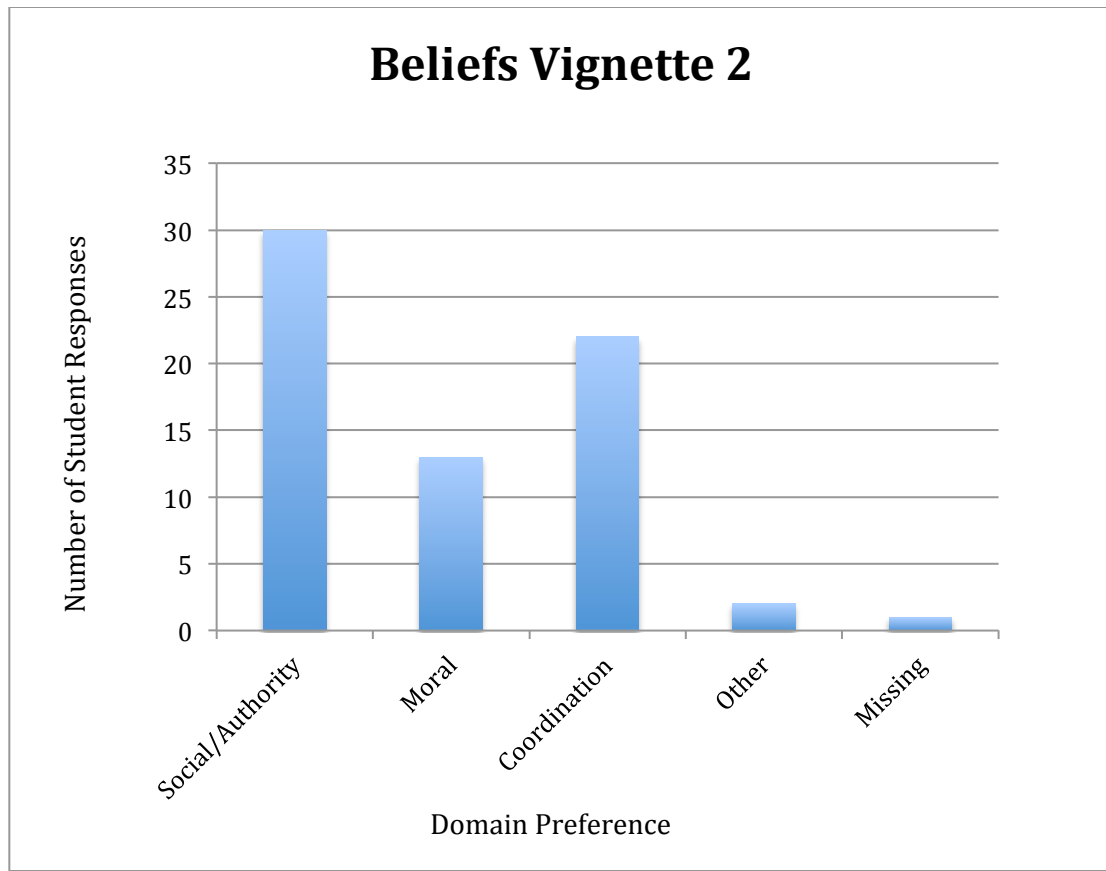
(*N* = 68)

Variable	Vignette 1		Vignette 2	
<b>Motivation/Desire</b>				
Relational	47	(69%)	40	(59%)
Instrumental	8	(12%)	10	(15%)
Combined	9	(13%)	14	(21%)
Other	4	(6%)	3	(4%)
Missing	0	(0)	1	(1%)
Total	68	(100%)	68	(100%)
<b>Rationale/Beliefs</b>				
Moral	60	(88%)	13	(19%)
Social convention	0	(0)	30	(44%)
Coordinated	4	(6%)	22	(32%)
Other	3	(4%)	2	(3%)
Missing	1	(1%)	1	(1%)
Total	68	(100%)	68	(100%)

*Note.* Percentages are shown in parentheses, and are rounded off/up to the nearest whole number. They represent the proportion of students in that group.

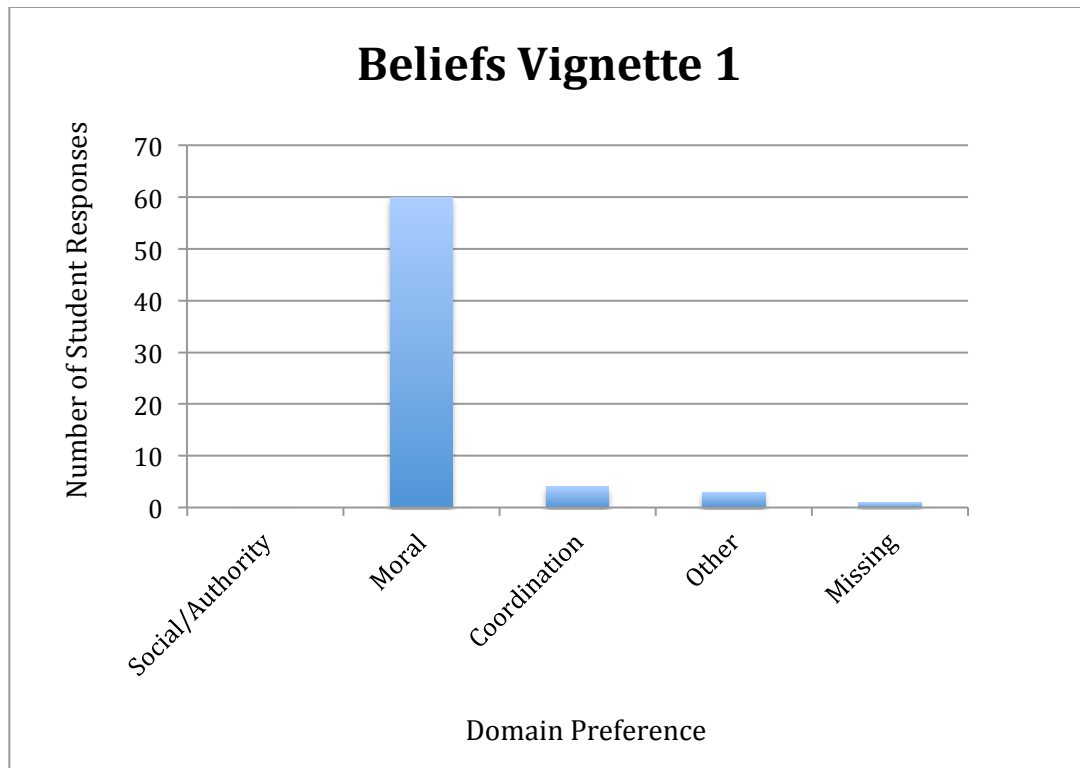
Exploring student socio-moral reasoning (beliefs), student responses to the vignettes were tallied to determine frequencies and percentages and a thematic analysis was performed. For these analyses student inclination toward domain subordination (choosing either moral or social convention rules) or domain coordination (recognizing potential areas of overlap and operating within both domains) to govern planned action was examined. These analyses were conducted separately for grade and gender. Vignette 2 was the focus in these analyses because it is a complex scenario, with both moral and social convention elements present, and is the same scenario for all three of the target grades. Vignette 1, also standard for all student participants, is reported as a less complex scenario. In each of the following sections covering grade and gender variables, overall frequency data are presented first, followed by specific data from Vignette 2, and finally data from Vignette 1. Student responses are then presented thematically, using direct quotes from student responses for each independent variable. The section concludes with a separate thematic analysis of vignette three, a unique scenario for each of the target grades.

**Relations between grade and student beliefs.** In Vignette 2, the Grade 3 participants were most likely to select a social convention as the rationale for their course of action, where as Grade 8 students were the most likely to coordinate both the moral and social convention elements in this scenario and were the least likely to select social conventions as the sole rationale for action. See Table 12 and Figure 4 for details of these differences in student beliefs by grade. In Vignette 1, all three grades chose moral reasons for their actions over a coordination of domains or choosing some other reason to explain their choice. No participant, regardless of grade, chose only a social convention to govern actions in response to this vignette.



*Figure 2.* Vignette 2: Domain subordination/coordination (Beliefs),  $N = 68$ .

Domain preference refers to the priority given by students to a social convention (social/authority), moral universal principle (moral), or a coordination of domains (social and moral) in their open responses.



*Figure 3.* Vignette 1: Domain subordination/coordination (Beliefs),  $N = 68$ .

Domain preference refers to the priority given by students to a social convention (social/authority), moral universal principle (moral), or a coordination of domains (social and moral) in their open responses.

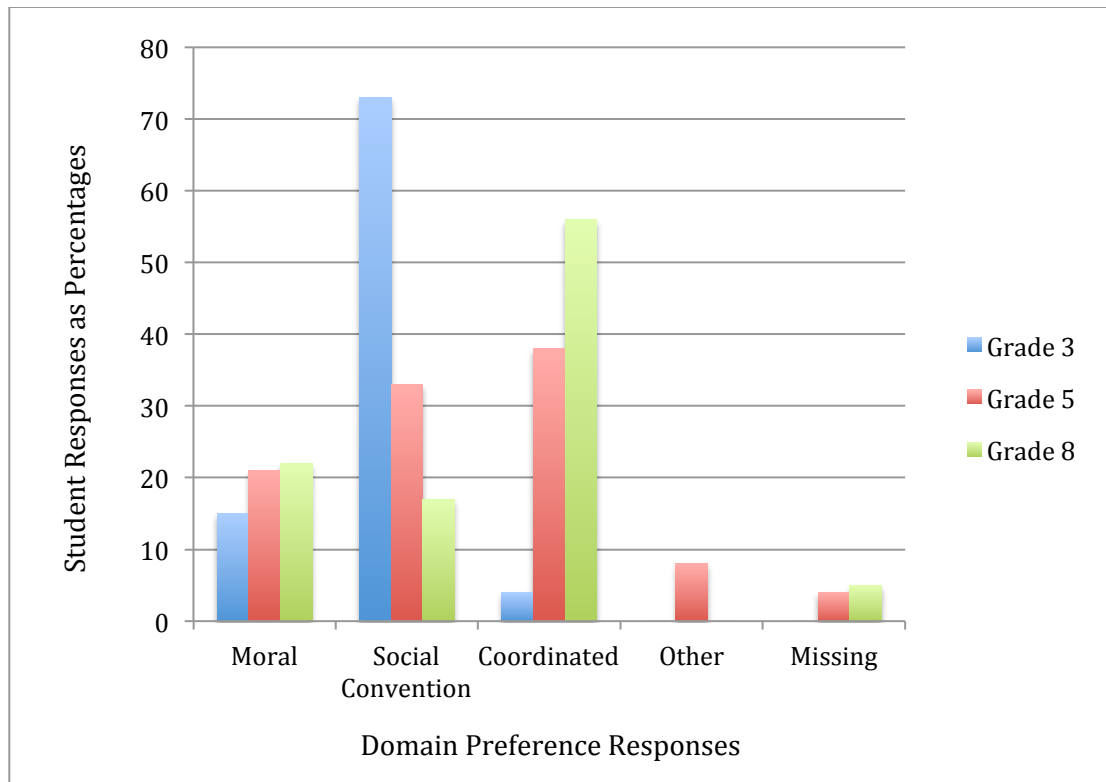


Table 12

*Domain Subordination/Coordination (Beliefs) based on Grade*

	Vignette 1		Vignette 2	
<b>Grade 3</b> <b><i>n</i> = 26</b>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Moral	25	(96)	4	(15)
Social convention	0		19	(73)
Coordinated	0		3	(12)
Other	1	(4)	0	
Missing	0		0	
Total	26	(100)	26	(100)
<b>Grade 5</b> <b><i>n</i> = 24</b>				
Moral	20	(83)	5	(21)
Social convention	0		8	(33)
Coordinated	2	(8)	9	(38)
Other	1	(4)	2	(8)
Missing	1	(4)	0	
Total	24	(100)	24	(100)
<b>Grade 8</b> <b><i>n</i> = 18</b>				
Moral	15	(83)	4	(22)
Social convention	0		3	(16)
Coordinated	2	(11)	10	(56)
Other	1	(6)	0	
Missing	0		1	(6)
Total	18	(100)	18	(100)

*Note.* Percentages are shown in parentheses, and are rounded off/up to the nearest whole number.



*Figure 4.* Vignette 2: Domain subordination/coordination (Beliefs) based on grade.

Domain preference refers to the priority given by students to a social convention (social/authority), moral universal principle (moral), or a coordination of domains (social and moral) in their open responses. Grade 3 ( $N = 26$ ); Grade 5 ( $N = 24$ ); Grade 8 ( $N = 18$ ).

**Relations between gender and student beliefs.** There were no observable differences between the genders in domain subordination or coordination tendencies for either Vignette 1 or 2, as noted on Table 13.

**Overall thematic analysis of Vignette 1 responses.** Reviewing responses of students to Vignette 1 a common theme was identified, that of a belief that it was right to return the money to the owner. Most students indicated one of two possible reasons for their decision to return the money. First, because it was something they would want someone else to do for them or there was something else they might gain (friends), and second, because the person who dropped the money may need it. For example, “I would pick up the ten dollars and return it to the owner. I would do this because if I lost my money, I would want it returned too. So I treat others the way I want them to treat me. Whether I like the person or not I would do the right thing and return it” (Urban student) and “I would pick it up and give it back to him. I did it because maybe he will do it back” (Urban student). “I would give the money back so that way if it was for them to go out for lunch at school then they would be able to” (Suburban student) and “I would pick it up and give it back to them because it belongs to them not me...I would give it back because I would want someone to give it back if I dropped it” (Suburban student). In a few instances the reasons for doing so indicated it was simply the right or respectful thing to do. For example: “I would choose to give it right back to them... because I respect other people’s belongings” (Rural setting student) and “It would be stealing if I took it so I wouldn’t and I wouldn’t do it different if it was a \$1,000.00 bill” (Rural student).

Table 13

*Domain Subordination/Coordination (Beliefs) Based on Gender*

	Vignette 1		Vignette 2	
<b>Female</b>				
<b><i>n</i> = 34</b>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Moral	28	(82)	6	(18)
Social convention	0		16	(47)
Coordinated	2	(6)	10	(29)
Other	3	(9)	1	(3)
Missing	1	(3)	1	(3)
Total	34	(100)	34	(100)
<b>Male</b>				
<b><i>n</i> = 34</b>				
Moral	32	(94)	7	(21)
Social convention	0		14	(41)
Coordinated	2	(6)	12	(35)
Other	0		1	(3)
Missing	0		0	
Total	34	(100)	34	(100)

*Note.* Percentages are shown in parenthesis, and are rounded off/up to the nearest whole number. They represent the proportion of students in that group.

**Thematic analysis of Vignette 1 responses among target grades.** Examining the responses of students by grade revealed some further differences in the beliefs of students. Responses of Grade 3 students indicated with greater consistency than Grade 5 or 8 that it is the right or nice thing to do, and/or if they did not do this they would get in trouble: “I would give the \$10.00 bill back to him. It is the right thing” (Grade 3 student) and “I will give it back to the person because it is not mine and I don’t want to get in trouble” (Grade 3 student). Two of the Grade 3 students did identify a desire to gain something for themselves: “I will give it back because it is good to give something back and you get friends and it’s not good for everybody to steal it or leave it.”

Grade 5 students’ responses indicated the belief that it is right to give the money back because either the person who dropped it might need it, or because they would want someone to do the same for them: “I would pick it up and give it back because if I dropped \$10.00 I’d like it back” (Grade 5 student) and “I would pick it up and give it to him because what happened if he needed it in the future” (Grade 5 student).

Grade 8 students similarly identify the possibility that the rightful owner might need the money, and that they would want someone to do the same for them, however, there were also four responses that indicated there were circumstance where they might just keep the money, if they didn’t know the person for example: “Give it back, I usually take a bus to my house so I would have no where to spend it...If I did not know who dropped it I would take it” (Grade 8 student).

**Thematic analysis of student responses to Vignette 1 according to gender.** Female student responses, more than male student responses indicated a belief that to return the money was the right thing to do, because it was kind or helpful: “I would say

that he or she dropped the \$10.00 bill and give it to them. It would be helpful and they might say I could keep it.” A secondary theme in the responses of female students appears to be a desire to avoid trouble, or feelings of guilt: “I will give it back to the person because it is not mine and I don’t want to get in trouble.”

Male students indicated more than female students, that it was wrong to keep the money because it was not theirs: “I would give it to the guy who dropped it because it is not my money.” The desire to avoid trouble/guilt or to be kind/helpful is less prevalent in the male participants.

Vignette 2 depicts a scenario with direct harm potential, and a mixing of moral (justice and human welfare based principles) and social convention matters (rules of a game). This is a more complex scenario than Vignette 1, which presented a single domain issue and indirect harm potential. Thematic analysis of this vignette across independent variables, grade and gender reveals further differences.

**Overall thematic analysis of Vignette 2 responses.** A theme that emerged among some student responses that highlighted a moral principle was the need to get help to avoid harm, either for themselves or others: “I would ask for help because I wouldn’t want any other people to get hurt” (Urban student) and “I would tell them to stop or I would get a teacher. If they won’t I would get a teacher. I would do that so it doesn’t turn into a big fist fight” (Urban student). The priority appears to be on the human welfare aspect rather than justice in these responses.

Other student responses indicated more self-reliance in solving this problem as well as recognition of the nature/purpose of the game (for fun): “I would ask why they are arguing about a goal when we are playing for fun. If it got worse I would get them to

leave and try to resolve the problem without fighting” (Suburban student). Here the moral aspect is one of human welfare. “I would say that it is just a game and it’s about having fun and who cares if you lose” (Rural student). In some responses there was recognition of the principle of justice. For example, “I would try to figure out a solution for the both of them or the two teams because I’d try to be fair.”

**Thematic analysis of Vignette 2 responses among target grades.** Examining student responses by target grades revealed some further differences in the beliefs of the students at different grade levels.

Some Grade 3 students’ responses indicate a belief about what is fair or just (a moral principle): “I’d say foul like pushing to the teacher so they would sit out for part of the game because they are not playing the game right” (Grade 3 student) and “I would do is fix the problem by playing over again and I would look again because we have to play fair” (Grade 3 student). In these responses it is not the human welfare aspect, but rather justice (what is fair) that is used in their reasoning for action.

Grade 5 students’ responses that highlight a moral principle indicate variable beliefs. While a belief that to assist is the best course of action to avoid harm, either directly or by getting an adult, some responses indicated a belief that it was not their problem to be involved in: “If I got involved, I would do my best to stop the fight. If I couldn’t handle it I would get help from an adult” (Grade 5 student). Putting their own welfare ahead of the needs of others, as they are more aware of the possible risks, was perhaps being considered, however, ultimately they do seek help from an adult to end the conflict.

Finally, a greater number of Grade 8 student responses indicated a belief that to argue over a game (matter of convention) was futile, and they would get involved to avoid harm for others (moral principle), however, they also indicated a belief that it

would be right not to get involved under certain circumstances, like when they didn't know the people, or they were much larger in size. They, like some of the Grade 5 students are weighing the risks to themselves, as they are perhaps more aware of what they might entail: "If it was someone I knew really well, I'd tell them to stop and break it up. If it wasn't I would probably let them go at it. If the person was humungous, I'd let them go at it. If the person was way older than me, I'd let them go at it. If not, then I'd break it up" (Grade 8 student).

**Thematic analysis of Vignette 2 responses according to gender.** Female students' responses that highlighted a moral principle indicated a belief that harm should be avoided, either for themselves or others. Their actions, ranged from not getting involved to getting a teacher to help. Fewer female student responses indicated they would step in themselves: "I would tell them to stop if they don't stop I would get a teacher because I don't want anyone to get hurt" (Female student) and "I will say stop because...I do not want to be involved" (Female student).

Male students' responses indicated a belief that fighting over a game intended for fun was wasting time. There was a willingness to get involved. However, the nature of involvement tended to be more physical than the female students' responses, perhaps indicating a belief that *might is right*: "I would ask the player what motivated him to get angry at a game of soccer that was for fun. I would push the arguing player and see how he reacts when others are being involved" (Male student). *Note.* Spelling in student quotes has been corrected to improve readability however, grammatical errors are as written by students.

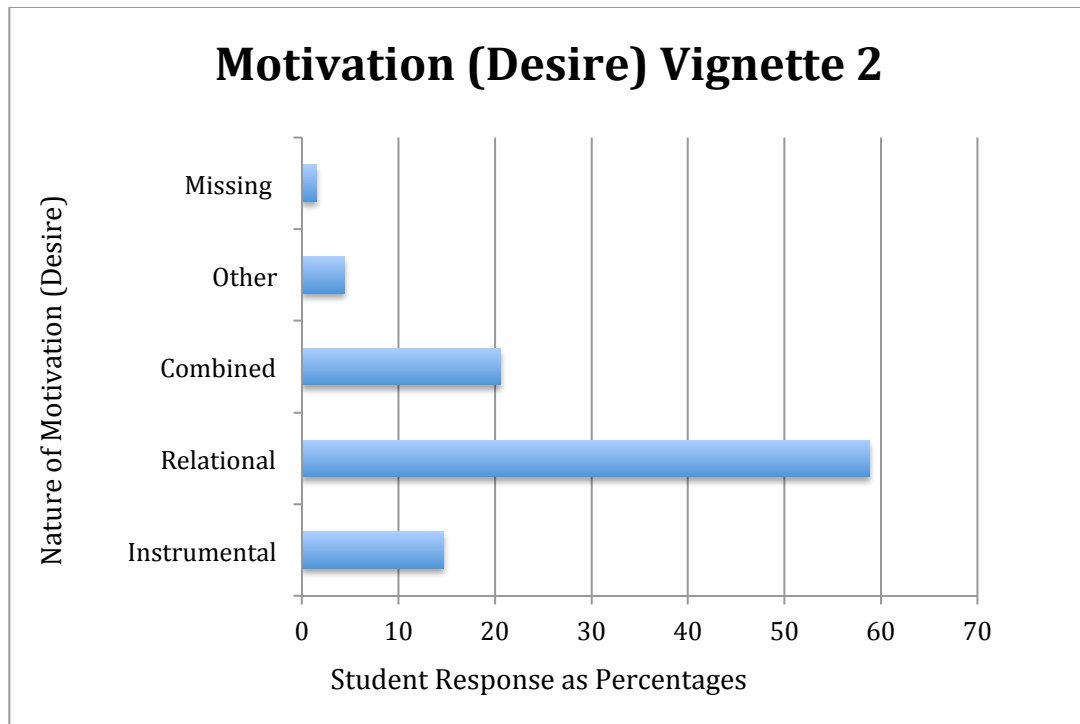
Student socio-moral reasoning was measured as beliefs, the rationale for making a choice, as well as the motivation or desire present in choices made. Desire was categorized as relational, instrumental, a combination of the two, or some other



motivation. Tables, 15 and 16 describe the differences noted in desire/motivation shown by student participants based on grade and gender. Once again, for each of these sections (grade and gender), data from Vignette 2 will begin the section as the main focus for analysis, followed by data from Vignette 1. A thematic analysis according to grade and gender, conclude this section.

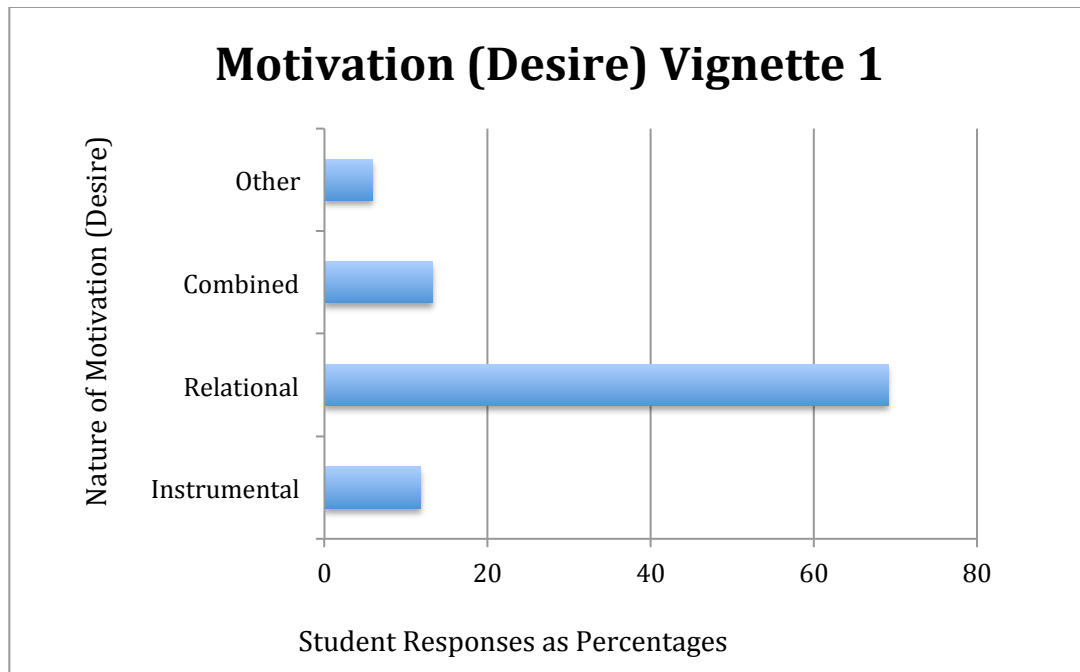
For Vignette 2, students ( $N = 68$ ) indicated a preference for relations over instrumental gain, a combination of relational and instrumental, or other motivation (see Figure 5). In this vignette the combined motivation (relational and instrumental) is slightly elevated from Vignette 1 (Figure 6). This item presents students with a scenario that has both moral and social convention elements and is more complex than the scenario in Vignette 1. It does imply some potential for direct harm, which may account for participant consideration of personal gain/risk in conjunction with relational gain potential when describing their course of action. Regardless, it appears students give strong consideration to relations in their decision-making.

Figure 8 clearly illustrates the preference for relational motivation for the student participants when responding to Vignette 1. This vignette was written with a single domain (moral principles) presented and implied potential indirect harm only (keeping money that had been found). For these reasons, it was perhaps the most simplistic of the scenarios presented to the students.



*Figure 5.* Vignette 2: Relational, instrumental, combined, and other motivation,  $N = 68$ .

Nature of motivation refers to the priority given to personal gain (instrumental), relationships (relational), or a combination of both personal and relationships in the student open responses.



*Figure 6.* Vignette 1: Relational, instrumental, combined, and other motivation,  $N = 68$ .

Nature of motivation refers to the priority given to personal gain (instrumental), relationships (relational), or a combination of both personal and relationships in the student open responses.

**Relations between grade and student desire/motivation.** For Grade 3

participants ( $n = 26$ ), 35 out of a possible 52 responses over the first two vignettes were relationally motivated. This represents an average of 67%. In other words, for Grade 3 participants, it was much more likely they would prioritize a relationship in their decision making than any other motivation, such as instrumental (personal gain).

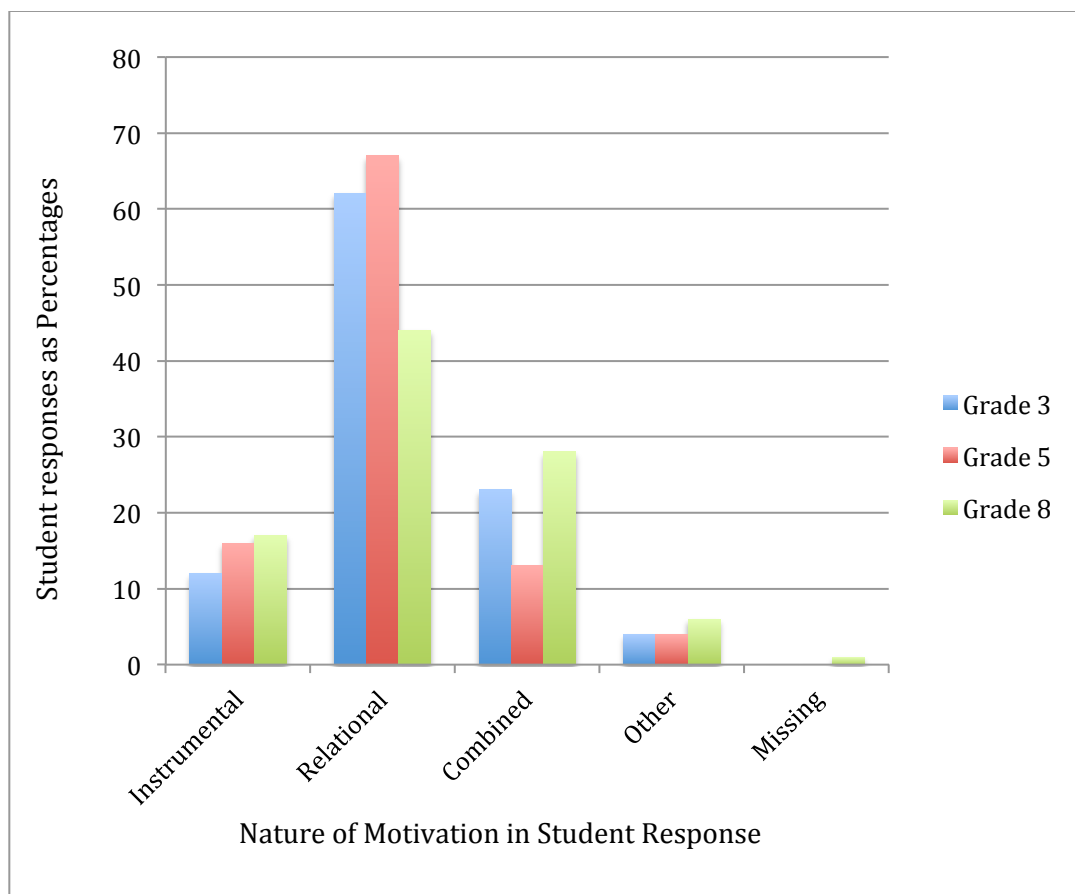
Grade 5 participants are the only grade to show an increase in their relational motivation from Vignette 1 to Vignette 2. Across the first two vignettes, Grade 5 participants' responses ( $n = 24$ ) indicate 30 out of a possible 48 were relationally motivated. This represents 63% likelihood relationships would be prioritized in their decision-making. Finally, Grade 8 students, ( $n = 18$ ), indicated a preference for relationships to motivate their behaviour, a total of 22 out of a possible 36 responses. This represents 61% of their responses. Grade 8 participants are the least likely to prioritize a relationship in their decision making when compared to the participants in Grades 3 and 5 (see Table 14 and Figures 7 and 8 for details). These evaluations do not take into account, combined motivation, where students might consider both the risks and potential gains for themselves as well as any relational gains. When combined motivation is added to relational motivation frequencies across the first two vignettes, the Grade 8 students demonstrate the highest level of relational with combined motivation at 83%.

Table 14

*Relational, Instrumental, Combined, and Other Motivation Frequencies Based on Grade*

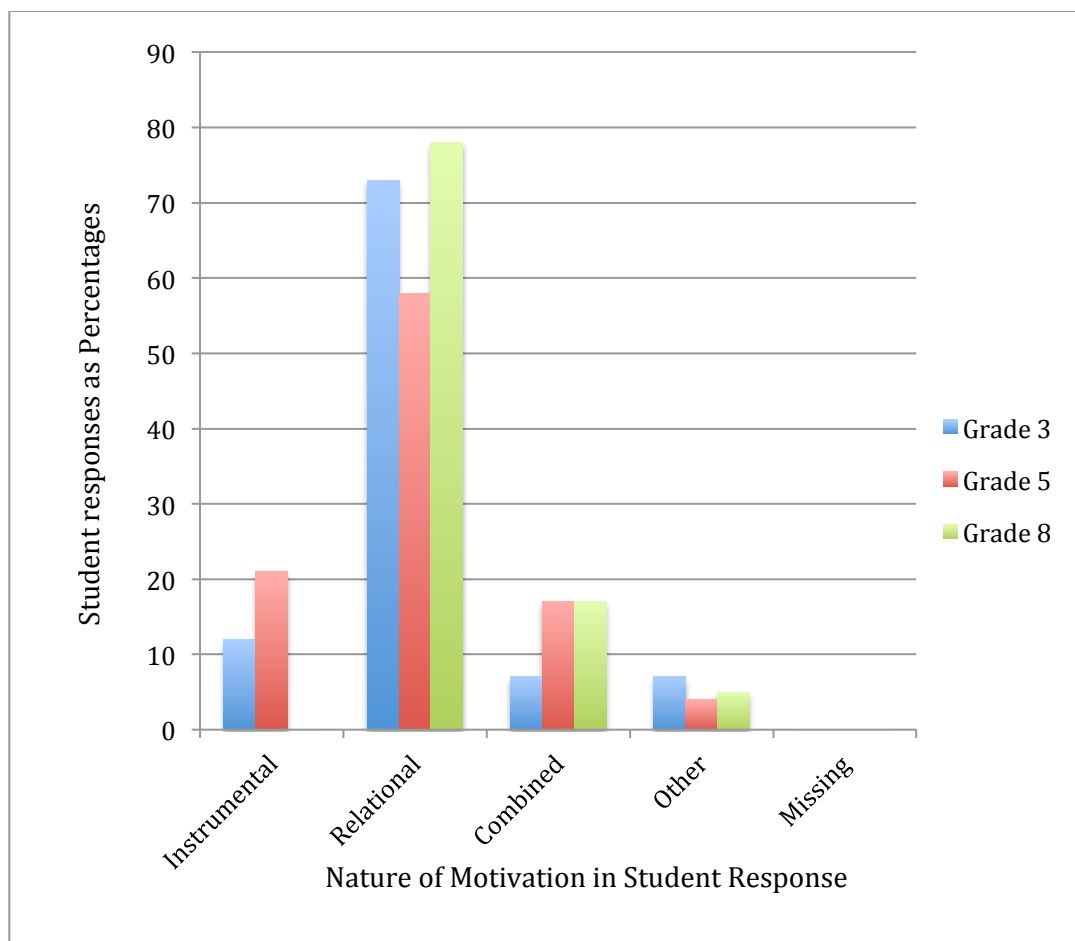
	Vignette 1		Vignette 2	
<b>Grade 3</b>				
<b><i>n</i> = 26</b>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Instrumental	3	(11)	3	(11)
Relational	19	(73)	16	(62)
Combined	2	(8)	6	(23)
Other	2	(8)	1	(4)
Missing	0	(0)	0	(0)
Total	26	(100)	26	(100)
<b>Grade 5</b>				
<b><i>n</i> = 24</b>				
Instrumental	5	(21)	4	(17)
Relational	14	(58)	16	(67)
Combined	4	(17)	3	(12)
Other	1	(4)	1	(4)
Missing	0	(0)	0	(0)
Total	24	(100)	24	(100)
<b>Grade 8</b>				
<b><i>n</i> = 18</b>				
Instrumental	0	(0)	3	(17)
Relational	14	(78)	8	(44)
Combined	3	(17)	5	(28)
Other	1	(5)	1	(5)
Missing	0	(0)	1	(5)
Total	18	(100)	18	(100)
<b>Total</b>				
Instrumental	8	(12)	10	(15)
Relational	47	(69)	40	(59)
Combined	9	(13)	14	(21)
Other	4	(6)	3	(4)
Missing	0	(0)	1	(1)
Total	68	(100)	68	(100)

*Note.* Percentages are shown in parenthesis, and are rounded off/up to the nearest whole number. They represent the proportion of students in that group.



*Figure 7.* Vignette 2: Relational, instrumental, combined, and other motivation (desire) based on grade.

Nature of motivation refers to the priority given to personal gain (instrumental), relationships (relational), or a combination of both personal and relationships in the student open responses. Grade 3 ( $N = 26$ ); Grade 5 ( $N = 24$ ); Grade 8 ( $N = 18$ ).



*Figure 8.* Vignette 1: Relational, instrumental, combined, and other motivation (desire) based on grade.

Nature of motivation refers to the priority given to personal gain (instrumental), relationships (relational), or a combination of both personal and relationships in the student open responses. Grade 3 ( $N = 26$ ); Grade 5 ( $N = 24$ ); Grade 8 ( $N = 18$ ).

Table 15

*Relational, Instrumental, Combined, and Other Motivation Frequencies based on Gender*

	Vignette 1		Vignette 2	
<b>Female</b>				
<b>N = 34</b>	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Instrumental	5	(14)	6	(18)
Relational	22	(65)	19	(56)
Combined	5	(15)	8	(23)
Other	2	(6)	0	(0)
Missing	0	(0)	1	(3)
Total	34	(100)	34	(100)
<b>Male</b>				
<b>N = 34</b>				
Instrumental	3	(9)	4	(12)
Relational	25	(73)	21	(61)
Combined	4	(12)	6	(18)
Other	2	(6)	3	(9)
Missing	0	(0)	0	(0)
Total	34	(100)	34	(100)

*Note.* Percentages are provided in parentheses, and are rounded off/up to the nearest whole number. They represent the proportion of students in that group.



**Relations between gender and student desire/motivation.** Male participants surpassed their female counterparts in the frequency with which relations were prioritized. When responses to the first two vignettes were interpreted for male ( $n = 34$ ) and female participants ( $n = 34$ , with one missing response), the following was indicated: Female participants prioritized relationships 41/67 or 61% of the time, and male participants prioritized relationships 46/68 or 68%. This finding does not include responses where the participants may have indicated a combined motivation. Female students were more likely overall to report a combination of relational and instrumental reasons for their choices than their male counterparts (see Table 15).

**Overall thematic analysis of Vignette 1 responses.** Several responses rationalized the decision to return the money by saying they would like someone to do the same for them, implying positive intentions are assumed of others for which they might one day benefit, or that what they would gain would be a positive relationship: “I will give it back because it’s good to give something back and you get friends” (Urban student) and “I would pick it up and give it back to him...I would do it because maybe he will do it back” (Urban student) and “I would pick it up and give it back to them because it belongs to them and not me...I would want someone to give it back if I dropped \$10.00” (Suburban student). Other responses indicated that it would be the “nice or helpful” thing to do, and so the interpretation is that people want to be nice and helpful to people we care about, and have or could have a relationship with: “I would give it back because it would be nicer than taking it for myself” (Rural student) and “I would say that he or she dropped the \$10.00 bill and give it to them. It would be helpful” (Rural student).

**Thematic analysis of Vignette 1 responses among target grades.** Among the Grade 3 responses there is a common desire to do what is right, and return the money because stealing is wrong. Such responses could be interpreted as, if you steal from others, they will not want to be your friends (relational) or as, they are fearful of a negative consequence for themselves (instrumental): “I would pick it up and tap him on the shoulder and say you dropped your \$10.00 bill on the floor because it is not right to steal” (Grade 3 student) and “I would give it back to the customer because if you don’t give it back that would be stealing” (Grade 3 student).

Some Grade 5 students’ responses feature references to reciprocity. The interpretation of such responses is that though they do not know or have a direct relationship with this individual they would choose to return the money because they would want someone to do the same for them: “ I would pick it up and give it back...because maybe he will do it back” (Grade 5 student) and “ I would pick up the ten dollars and return it to the owner...I would want it returned too” (Grade 5 student).

Some Grade 8 students’ responses indicated a desire to be viewed in a positive light by others. The implication is that if they treat others with kindness and respect, they will benefit (either in personal satisfaction of knowing they did the right thing, and maintaining their integrity, or in admiration from others) thereby increasing their positive relationships with others. For example: “ I would give it back...I wouldn’t choose a different solution under any circumstances, because then I wouldn’t be a trustworthy person to others” (Grade 8 student) and “I would pick it up and return it to them. I would do this because it is respectful” (Grade 8 student).

**Thematic analysis of Vignette 1 responses according to gender.** Female

student responses, more than male student responses indicated a desire to be nice which may be interpreted as being viewed positively by others. Those we view positively are more likely to be those we choose to associate with, therefore the motivation for female students can be interpreted as relational: “I would give it back because it would be nicer than taking it for myself” (Female student) and “I would tell them they dropped it...because it is nice and I don’t want to be mean” (Female student).

Some male students’ responses implied either a fear of consequence (therefore they act to avoid punishment) or that they would act to be viewed positively by others: “If I know who dropped it I would give it back or give it to the principal because that is stealing and I try not to get in trouble” (Male student) and “ I pick it up and I give it to him because it would be rude if I take it” (Male student).

Moving to the second, more complex vignette with direct harm potential and a mixing of domains, a thematic analysis conducted with student responses according to grade and gender, confirm the differences in desire identified above when choosing a course of action.

**Overall thematic analysis of Vignette 2 responses.** Several student responses indicated a common theme is a desire to maintain friendships: “ I would do is fix the problem by playing over again and I would look again because we have to play fair. If you don’t play fair you would not play soccer” (Urban student). The implication is that if they do not help others they cannot play the game because to play the game, there must be individuals who want to associate with them. Further, “ I would tell him to back off and go start your own game...because if he was pushing my friends around I wouldn’t

like it” (Urban student). “I would break the fight and talk it over...because they are my friends” (Suburban student). Other responses indicate a desire to keep people happy and having fun: “ If they were fighting about a goal I’d try to find a way so everyone’s happy. Because then everyone’s not sad or angry they’re happy” (Rural student) and “ I would tell them we play for fun” (Rural student). The implication in these responses is that if people are happy and having fun, others will want to associate with them, thereby increasing their positive relationships with others.

**Thematic analysis of Vignette 2 responses among target grades.** Within the Grade 3 students’ responses the theme of “games are for fun” surfaces regularly, and to a lesser degree, a desire to avoid conflict/fighting. This was interpreted as, students act to maintain conditions that allow them to have fun and not be in conflict, therefore there is some personal gain in maintaining the relationships with others that provide these opportunities: “I would solve the problem so we can play a friendly game of soccer” (Grade 3 student) and “I’ll say could you please stop, because it is just a game and it is for fun” (Grade 3 student).

Within Grade 5 students’ responses the theme that was identified was not so much reciprocity, as in Vignette 1, but more so, a desire avoid a fight. This can be interpreted as relational given that being in conflict would not lead to positive relationships with friends: “I would break up the fight and talk it over...because they are my friends and I don’t want to fight.” (Grade 5 student).

Finally, some Grade 8 students’ responses indicated a desire to end the conflict peacefully, by taking control, suggesting they see themselves being viewed by others as authoritative, and the students in conflict would listen to them. This action could garner

them more positive relations: “I would get them away from each other or tell a teacher” (Grade 8 student) and “First I would stop the pushing especially because someone could get hurt. Then I would tell the player who started the pushing that we could make it fair by adding or taking away a point from each team. I would do this because then whatever option the players agreed on would make both of them happy and make the situation fair” (Grade 8 student).

**Thematic analysis of Vignette 2 responses according to gender.** Female students’ responses indicated their desire was to intervene or get help to resolve the conflict to avoid negative outcomes for anyone and maintain peaceful conditions. For example: “ I would say we can all stop pushing and it will be a goal so no one’s feelings are hurt” (Female student). This response is interpreted to mean the student sees a peaceful resolution to being integral to maintain positive relations between people. The motivation shown is therefore considered relational. This is a shift from the desire indicated in the Vignette 1 that appeared to be linked more to being viewed positively by others.

In the responses of male students the desire is to maintain the fun of the game, suggesting that not to intervene and stop the conflict (or get help) would interfere in people having fun. This was interpreted as relational because it was presumed that people would choose to spend time with those they have fun with, therefore a relationship is maintained or enhanced through these actions: “ I would say it is just a game so we should have fun” (Male student) and “I would ask why they are arguing about a goal when we are playing for fun...I would get them to leave and try to resolve the problem without fighting” (Male student). The reference to resolving the problem without

fighting, or stopping things from escalating were interpreted as desire to maintain positive relationships however, they may also be indicative of desire to avoid trouble from authority figures: “I would separate the players and have the teachers handle it as students are not supposed to get involved with physical contact” (Male student).

**Thematic analysis of Vignette 3 for beliefs and desires.** A unique scenario was depicted for each of the target grades however, since not all grades were represented in each of the settings comparisons were not made. These observations are included for descriptive purposes only and are presented with beliefs and desires combined for each grade.

The vignette employed with the Grade 3 students depicts a situation where the teacher is called away from the class for a few moments to assist an ill student in the hallway. Left alone, a couple of students begin to throw paper planes and erasers across the room. The responses of the Grade 3 students to this scenario indicate a belief that to act in such a way is wrong. Some identify the possible harm that could be caused, as physical “someone could get hurt” and some identify the possible harm as more abstract, “attention is on them, and it should be on our work.” For example: “I would go and tell the teacher...because someone could get a paper airplane in the eye” (Urban Grade 3 student), “I would tell them you shouldn’t speak or do that when other students are working because they would get disturbed” (Suburban Grade 3 student), and “I would tell them to stop because they might be keeping other people from their work” (Rural Grade 3 student).

Many state that they would tell the teacher. This is interpreted as relying upon a social authority figure to maintain order: “I would tell the teacher...because they will get in trouble and they are not following the rules” (Suburban Grade 3 student), “I would tell a teacher because I don’t have the power to stop them because they would call me

names” (Urban Grade 3 student), and “I would wait for the teacher and tell her what happened because they should do their work” (Rural Grade 3 student). No student identified personal gain (e.g., praise from the teacher for telling them about the disturbance) as their motivation for action therefore responses were interpreted as relational in nature.

The Grade 5 scenario depicts a social exclusion situation. Some friends decide to start a club and when someone else asks to “hang out” at break time, they are told they cannot because they are not in the club. This causes the peer to look away tearfully. Student responses indicated a belief that to exclude one from a group needlessly would cause them harm and so they looked for alternatives to this outcome implying a desire to maintain positive relations: “I would try to get members of the club to make it a club for everyone. If they didn’t agree I would either quit or set up times for classmates not in the club. I would do this because I know everyone should be treated equally” (Urban Grade 5 student) and “I would hang out with him or her because I understand how it will feel if I was not allowed to join a club and have no one to hang out with” (Urban Grade 5 student). Of note, one female student identified that there was a condition under which they would not change the outcome of social exclusion: “I would say sorry and talk to my friends about letting them in. If it was an all girls club and a boy asked to play I will say no because it is an all girls club” (Urban Grade 5 student). This response in particular, while not typical, recognizes the convention of membership sometimes requiring specific criteria.

The scenario presented to Grade 8 students depicts a situation where the student is on their way to school when they come upon another student who is injured after falling

from their bike. They know if they are late for school again they will likely have to serve a detention. Student responses indicated a belief that to ignore someone in need of help is wrong and that serving a detention, if that was a consequence was less of an issue: “I would help them and try and stop them from bleeding so much...I would still help them even if it means getting detention and being late for school” (Suburban Grade 8 student) and “I would help the poor kid of course! I’d tell my teacher what happened and then take the detention” (Rural Grade 8 student). The concern for another, over the costs to them personally, was interpreted as relational motivation in these situations.

In one of the responses the actions of the student indicated a condition where they might choose not to help another: “I would call for help or help the student out...because I treat others with respect and help others in need. I might choose differently if the person bullied me ever” (Rural Grade 8 student). In two other responses the belief that it was right to help another person in need was present, however, their motivation implied there might be a way to avoid any cost to them: “If they needed help I would help them. Then I would tell the teacher and explain what happened so I wouldn’t get detention” (Suburban Grade 8 student).

### **Educator Participants: The UIC Questionnaire**

The modified UIC questionnaire is divided in three parts: The first part was intended to measure educator knowledge pertaining to moral development theory—specifically social cognitive domain theory. The next part of the questionnaire was intended to measure a second variable, educator beliefs and sense of efficacy pertaining to character education. The third and final part, and the only part to be modified, was to collect demographic data from the educator participants.



Table 16 provides a summary of descriptive statistics regarding the educators' moral development knowledge and their sense of efficacy and beliefs regarding character education. Tables 17 and 18 provide further descriptive analysis of each item from Parts A and B of the UIC educator questionnaire. Appendix F details every question and the responses given by each educator for all items on the UIC questionnaire. All descriptive statistical analyses were performed with a 95% confidence interval. Further statistical tests were not possible due to the small sample size therefore all educator data is interpreted qualitatively only.

For the purposes of being able to compare results obtained from this study with the results of an earlier study (see Nucci et al., 2005) high scores were determined for both Part A and B of the UIC questionnaire. Moral Development TTL, Part A of the questionnaire, has a maximum score of 14. To determine a high score, the mean score was summed with one standard deviation ( $8.86 + 1.35$ ). Thus an individual score of 10.21 on the Moral Development TTL was considered a high score and was achieved by three participants. Similarly, to determine a high score for Part B, the Efficacy/Beliefs scale, the mean score was summed with one standard deviation ( $124.14 + 11.47$ ). Thus 135.61 was considered a high score on the Efficacy/Beliefs TTL. A score of 135 or greater was obtained from two educator participants. See Figures 9 and 10 for an overview of educator scores in moral development knowledge and sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education.

Educators' responses to the individual items of the UIC questionnaire were explored with respect to knowledge of moral development theory, Part A of the UIC questionnaire. First, every educator ( $N = 7$ ) indicated awareness that children between the ages of 3 and 5 have understanding of morality as direct reciprocity. In addition, 4 of the educators recognize that understanding conventions, as components of social systems, are

formed in elementary school age years as opposed to middle or high school age. The remaining 3 educators indicated this knowledge is formed during preschool years. Item 8 addressed how student conflict should be addressed. Responses indicated each of the educators would “engage the children in domain appropriate discourse that will help them construct their own solution to their interpersonal conflict.” (UIC questionnaire Item 8, option c)

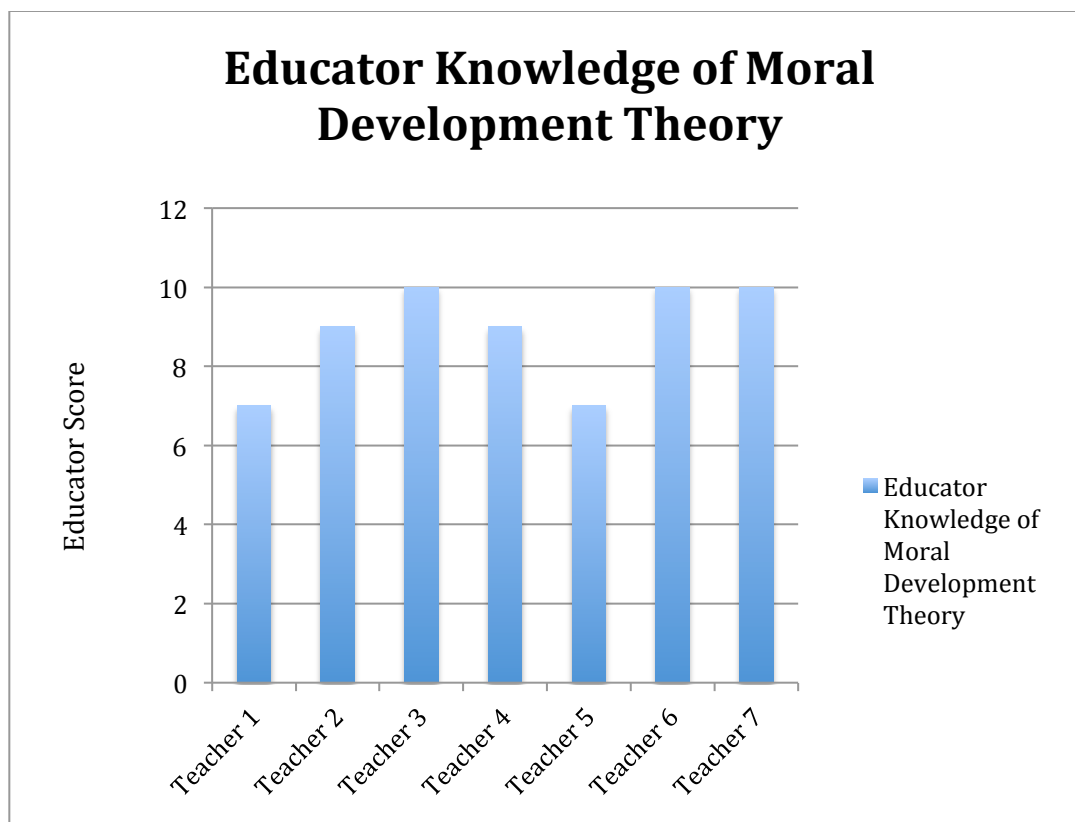
Item 9 responses indicated that most of the educators would respond to a student hitting a classmate by saying, “John that really hurt Mike. How would you like it if others treated you that way” (UIC questionnaire Item 9, option b), while the responses of 2 educators indicated a less constructive approach, “ John, your behaviour is not what we expect of students at our school.” (UIC questionnaire Item 9, option c) reducing the conduct to an expectation, rather than addressing the moral principle of causing harm. This would be considered a domain discordant response. Educator responses to Item 11 reflected that each educator views student noise in the classroom as a matter of social convention, in their selection of option c, “ Please use your inside voice. This is the classroom, not the playground.” (UIC questionnaire Item 11, option c) This would be considered a domain concordant response.

Table 16

*Descriptive Statistics for the Educator Questionnaire, Parts A and B*

Scale	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Mdn
Part A: Moral Development TTL	7	8.86	1.35	9.0
Part B: Efficacy/Beliefs TTL	7	124.14	11.47	124

*Note.* Part A: Moral Development TTL = Part A: UIC Moral Development Total. Part B: Efficacy/Beliefs TTL = Part B: UIC Sense of Efficacy and Beliefs Total.



*Figure 9.* Part A: Moral development knowledge for educator participants.

Teacher 1 teaches Grade 3 and has between 9 and 12 years experience.  
 Teacher 2 teaches Grade 5 and has between 9 and 12 years experience.  
 Teacher 3 teaches Grade 8 and has between 0 and 3 years experience.  
 Teacher 4 teaches Grade 3 and has between 3 and 6 years experience.  
 Teacher 5 teaches Grade 5 and has between 3 and 6 years experience.  
 Teacher 6 teaches Grade 3 and has more than 12 years experience.  
 Teacher 7 teaches Grade 8 and has more than 12 years experience.

Table 17

*Descriptive Statistics for Each Item from Part A of the Educator Questionnaire*

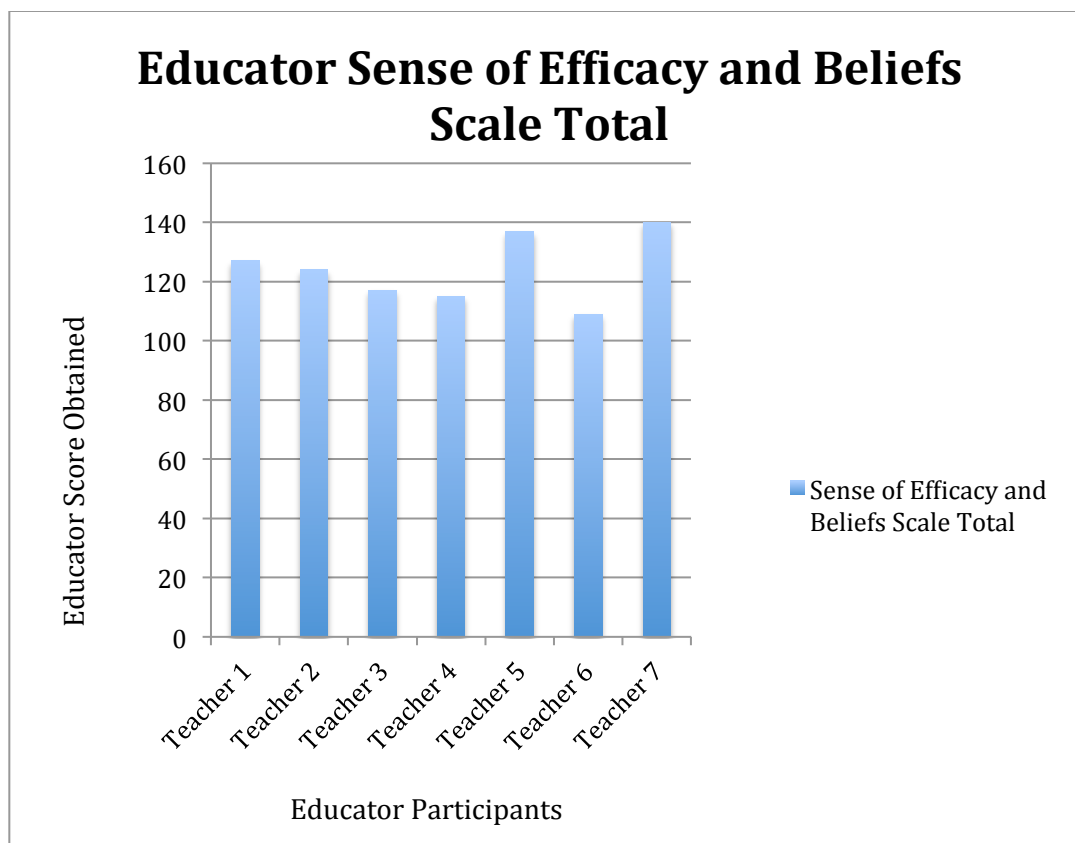
Item	Valid Response	Frequency	Percent
A1	B	6	85.7
	C	1	14.3
	Total	7	100
A2	A	1	14.3
	B	2	28.6
	D	4	57.1
	Total	7	100
A3	A	3	42.9
	B	4	57.1
	Total	7	100
A4	B	7	100
A5	A	3	42.9
	B	4	57.1
	Total	7	100
A6	A	4	57.1
	B	3	42.9
	Total	7	100
A7	C	1	14.3
	D	1	14.3
	F	5	71.4
	Total	7	100
A8	C	7	100
A9	B	5	71.4
	C	2	28.6
	Total	7	100
A10	A	4	57.1
	D	3	42.9
	Total	7	100

*(table continues)*

Item	Valid Response	Frequency	Percent
A11	D	7	100
A12	B	7	100
A13	C	1	14.3
	D	6	85.7
	Total	7	100
A14	A	3	42.9
	D	4	57.1
	Total	7	100

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*Note.* Part A of the Educator Questionnaire included 14 multiple-choice items. The focus of these items was to measure educator knowledge of moral development, specifically, social cognitive domain theory. Since no prior knowledge was assumed and it was suggested as helpful during the pilot of this questionnaire, general information about social cognitive domain theory was provided on the cover of the questionnaire.



*Figure 10.* Part B: Efficacy/beliefs TTL for educator participants.

Teacher 1 teaches Grade 3 and has between 9 and 12 years experience.  
 Teacher 2 teaches Grade 5 and has between 9 and 12 years experience.  
 Teacher 3 teaches Grade 8 and has between 0 and 3 years experience.  
 Teacher 4 teaches Grade 3 and has between 3 and 6 years experience.  
 Teacher 5 teaches Grade 5 and has between 3 and 6 years experience.  
 Teacher 6 teaches Grade 3 and has more than 12 years experience.  
 Teacher 7 teaches Grade 8 and has more than 12 years experience.

Table 18

*Descriptive Statistics for Each Item from Part B of the Educator Questionnaire*

Item	Response	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard Deviation
B1	Agree (4)	3	42.9	4.57	.535
	Strongly Agree (5)	4	57.1		
RB2	Disagree (4)	4	57.1	4.42	.534
	Strongly Disagree (5)	3	42.9		
B3	Uncertain (3)	1	14.3	4.43	.787
	Agree (4)	2	28.6		
	Strongly Agree (5)	4	57.1		
B4	Uncertain (3)	3	42.9	3.86	.900
	Agree (4)	2	28.6		
	Strongly Agree (5)	2	28.6		
RB5	Uncertain (3)	2	28.6	4.00	.816
	Disagree (4)	3	42.9		
	Strongly Disagree (5)	2	28.6		
RB6	Disagree (4)	5	71.4	4.28	.487
	Strongly Disagree (5)	2	28.6		
B7	Agree (4)	5	71.4	4.29	.488
	Strongly Agree (5)	2	28.6		
B8	Uncertain (3)	1	14.3	4.00	.577
	Disagree (4)	5	71.4		
	Strongly Disagree (5)	1	14.3		
RB9	Disagree (4)	5	71.4	4.28	.487
	Strongly Disagree (5)	2	28.6		
RB10	Strongly Disagree (5)	1	14.3	3.57	1.27
	Uncertain (3)	1	14.3		
	Agree (2)	4	57.1		
	Strongly Agree (1)	1	14.3		
B11	Uncertain (3)	1	14.3	3.86	.690
	Agree (4)	5	71.4		
	Strongly Agree (5)	1	14.3		
RB12	Strongly Disagree (5)	3	42.9	4.00	1.41
	Disagree (4)	3	42.9		
	Strongly Agree (1)	1	14.3		
B13	Disagree (2)	1	14.3	3.43	.787
	Uncertain (3)	2	28.6		
	Agree (4)	4	57.1		
B14	Agree (4)	6	85.7	4.14	.378
	Strongly Agree (5)	1	14.3		

*(table continues)*



Item	Response	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard Deviation
RB15	Disagree (4)	3	42.9	4.57	.534
	Strongly Disagree (5)	4	57.1		
B16	Uncertain (3)	5	71.4	3.43	.787
	Agree (4)	1	14.3		
	Strongly Agree (5)	1	14.3		
RB17	Agree (2)	1	14.3	3.85	.899
	Disagree (4)	5	71.4		
	Strongly Disagree (5)	1	14.3		
RB18	Strongly Agree (1)	1	14.3	2.14	.899
	Agree (2)	5	71.4		
	Disagree (4)	1	14.3		
B19	Uncertain (3)	2	28.6	3.71	.488
	Agree (4)	5	71.4		
RB20	Disagree (4)	5	71.4	4.28	.487
	Strongly Disagree (5)	2	28.6		
RB21	Agree (2)	1	14.3	3.85	.899
	Disagree (4)	5	71.4		
	Strongly Disagree (5)	1	14.3		
B22	Strongly Disagree (1)	1	14.3	3.00	1.29
	Disagree (2)	2	28.6		
	Agree (4)	4	57.1		
B23	Disagree (2)	4	57.1	2.57	.787
	Uncertain (3)	2	28.6		
	Agree (4)	1	14.3		
RB24	Strongly Agree (1)	1	14.3	3.57	1.13
	Disagree (4)	6	85.7		
RB25	Agree (2)	1	14.3	3.57	.975
	Uncertain (3)	2	28.6		
	Disagree (4)	3	42.9		
	Strongly Disagree (5)	1	14.3		
B26	Uncertain (3)	5	71.4	3.29	.488
	Agree (4)	2	28.6		
B27	Agree (4)	4	57.1	4.43	.535
	Strongly Agree (5)	3	42.9		
RB28	Agree (2)	3	42.9	3.28	1.25
	Disagree (4)	3	42.9		
	Strongly Disagree (5)	1	14.3		
B29	Uncertain (3)	2	28.6	4.29	.951
	Agree (4)	1	14.3		
	Strongly Agree (5)	4	57.1		
B30	Agree (4)	3	42.9	4.57	.535
	Strongly Agree (5)	4	57.1		

*(table continues)*

Item	Response	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Standard Deviation
B31	Uncertain (3)	1	14.3	4.14	.690
	Agree (4)	4	57.1		
	Strongly Agree (5)	2	28.6		
B32	Uncertain (3)	1	14.3	4.43	.787
	Agree (4)	2	28.6		
	Strongly Agree (5)	4	57.1		

*Note.* Part B of the Educator Questionnaire included 32 Likert scale items. Positively scored items ranged from Strongly Agree with a value of 5 to Strongly Disagree with a value of 1. Reverse scored items, indicated with an R before the item number were scored as Strongly Disagree with a value of 5 to strongly Agree with a value of 1. The focus of these items was to measure educator beliefs and sense of efficacy in delivering Character Education.

To explore the individual items and the responses given by each educator the following observations were made with respect to educator beliefs and sense of efficacy regarding character education, Part B of the UIC questionnaire. To begin, each of the educators feels they are able to discuss issues of right and wrong with their students, 43% (agree) 57% (strongly agree). This was confirmed with Item 7, where most (71%) educators reported they know how to use strategies that might lead to changes in students' concepts of fairness and concern for others. Item 9, which is reverse scored, further supports this belief. 71% of the educator participants identify the creation of a trusting classroom environment as influential in the moral orientation of children who come from harsh or uncaring environments. Yet, 43% of the educator participants indicated they were uncertain how to identify moral and conventional domain issues in the regular academic curriculum or how to create lessons that are consistent with moral and conventional domain issues.

Findings showed the majority of educators reported feeling confident (57% strongly agree and 43% agree) in their ability to use everyday interactions to develop students' respect and sense of fairness in response to Item 30. Further, 57% responded to Item 31 indicating confidence in their ability to use rules in the classroom to instruct students on the purposes of conventions/social norms. One further observation of note, one educator, with 12+ years experience, who identified her school community as having a middle range socio-economic level, instructs her students weekly in *moral lessons* and yet identifies she is uncertain about her ability to continuously improve the ways she engages students in their moral development.

### **Educator Participants: Interview Analyses**

To further explore the knowledge of moral development, the sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education, and the practices employed by educator participants, semistructured interviews were conducted. Three interviews were conducted with educator participants, all female, and ranging in years of experience. To ensure confidentiality, each of the interviewees was given a pseudonym. Mary teaches Grade 3 in a rural setting and has 12+years experience, Joan teaches Grade 3 in an urban setting and has between 6 and 9 years experience, and Alice teaches Grade 8 in a rural setting, and has 12+ years experience. Responses of each interviewee to the questions posed are outlined separately in the following section with themes identified. Each interview was also explored separately, and where relevant, responses to specific items from the UIC questionnaire were incorporated. To provide further context for student findings the identified themes were triangulated with the educator questionnaire and student participant data set.

**Sense of Community.** The following four questions were intended to explore how each of the educators interviewed develop community in their classrooms:

1. When establishing the routines for your classroom at the beginning of the year, please describe your practice.

Mary

It's structured in the sense that they know the expectations...and as far as the rules--and this goes for the first day... I'm giving them input but it's guided as well, so it's not a matter of what are the rules, let's write them down. It's guided and put in a positive sense. It isn't don't do this, don't

do that – it’s guided and then I put it into a chart and they all sign it too...  
so it’s kinda like a buy in with them, here’s what we created and what  
we’re doing. (June, 2011)

Joan

Involves identifying what they expect themselves, I don’t just give them  
rules...together we come up with respect, and create a poster contract  
(June, 2011)

Alice

I guess I don’t really present it as much as rules as I like to present it as  
expectations. The students together, generate a list of their expectations  
and then I provide them a list of my expectations so as far as what rules  
and things they need to follow – yes they have a large say in what goes on  
in the classroom, um, in some cases though...they’ll say “no homework –  
there should be a rule” and those kinds of things obviously we are not  
going to post those but something reasonable might be to lessen the  
workload or to be considerate of what other things are going on in their  
lives. (July, 2011)

The first theme noted in educator responses to this question was *collaboration*.

All three of the participants described a similar process whereby students were engaged  
in collaborative discussions with their teachers to determine the class rules. Each educator  
described a need to “guide” this process to ensure the rules are phrased in positives and  
are reasonable (for example, one educator identified a student-generated rule that there be  
no homework as an unreasonable rule and cited reasons why it was considered

unreasonable to support student understanding). “We start at the beginning of the year collaboratively, what the expectations are and again, yah if I don’t think one of the things they have put down is particularly reasonable, like the homework example, then we discuss why that’s not reasonable” (Alice, July 2011).

Two educators elaborated to make the distinction between rules that are more routines or operational type matters, such as lining up, and more school culture related rules, such as showing respect, and what that looks like, and what it is not. This distinction led to a second theme, *respect*. Two of the three educators pointed out respect as a principle they hold in their classrooms for how individuals conduct themselves.

Mary

I think too, “being respectful” what does that mean and what does it look like. So we talk about that too, what are some examples of being respectful and what is not. (June, 2011)

Joan

Together we come up with respect, and create a poster contract. (June, 2011)

This clarification led to the final theme identified for this question: *rules and expectations*. All three educators interviewed made a distinction between “rules” and “expectations.” Two of the educators referred to rules to govern the operational matters of the day, the specifics, where expectations were more general, and related more to the overall culture or tone of the classroom.

Alice

As far as what rules and things they need to follow – yes they have a large say in what goes on in the classroom, um, in some cases though...they’ll say “no

homework – there should be a rule” and those kinds of things obviously we are not going to post...If they have a commitment, that kind of thing, then I want to take that into consideration. So I like to think of it as a shared process and then to list what my expectations are of them. (July, 2011)

Joan

They can explain why the rules exist and often help to “enforce” rules with one another.... an example is the “trade a pencil” practice. (June, 2011)

The third educator who made the distinction, referring to expectations rather than rules, focused on more of an operational matter as an example, rather than a classroom culture matter.

Mary

In terms of lining up, when they do go to different classes, like gym and they need to know what the expectations are. What are the expectations...reminders about staying in your seat. (June, 2011)

In all cases, educator respondents were relating their practices for establishing structure in their classrooms.

## 2. When rules are not adhered to, what do you do?

Mary

First I would move to the area, then they are moved, then there’s a time out but it never gets to that...there’s a reminder so let’s say someone is chatting and I tell them...I need them to stay on task and if it’s again, then they’re removed (not removed from the class, moved to a table) to get something

done. A lot of times I will say you are chatting and interrupting others. (June, 2011)

Joan

We use a decision board – a clothes peg /name system. When one warning is given privately the peg goes up, warning two is a loss of recess, warning three is a notice home to their parent... but students know it is a fresh start every day. (June, 2011)

Alice

If students are speaking out – or maybe just speaking out of turn...I'll approach the student privately at their desk. I don't feel comfortable and I don't believe it's the best way to deal with it if I call the student out in front of all the others. (July, 2011)

Respondents focused their responses to this question on operational type infractions. The first theme observed in these responses was one of *maintaining dignity*. In general, all three participants remarked that they first move closer to the “offending student” or speak to the student privately, usually reminding him or her of the rules in the room. One of the educators, Mary commented that she reminds students too of the impact of their behavior on others (e.g., disturbing the learning of others). These practices tend to be informal in nature. In Joan's classroom, this process was somewhat more formalized, using a “peg system” where warnings were tracked visually, with definite assigned consequences for each level of warning.

A second theme of *student autonomy* was also identified. Two educators remarked that students also correct one another when a rule is not followed, either in the



classroom or on the playground. This they felt was related to the fact that rules were co-constructed, and so a sense of ownership and responsibility was felt by students to adhere to their agreed-upon rules. This in turn relates to students monitoring and correcting their own conduct.

Joan

They often help to enforce rules with one another. (June, 2011)

Alice

It happens on the playground I guess, because I've had students come in and say, 'you know these kids said something about the way that I acted, and I'm sorry that I did that,' so I know that it's not just happening in the classroom. (July, 2011)

3. To help students feel that they belong, and are cared for by others please describe the educational strategies you implement in your classroom.

Mary

It's discussions and role modeling that. And there's a sense too of working together. So whether it's something that's a project...sometimes I let them pick partners, sometimes I pick, but there are lots of times that they are working in a group...so we talk about that. How do you work in a group? That's taught as well, how do you speak to somebody. How do you give other people a turn, when you are presenting, and sharing and you need to sit and listen, take turns and how do you do that. So it's very much broken down and directed, and not assumed. We'll vote on things or if they think they've got an idea or if they've got something to share, to let them take the

lead and give them that role, again it gives that feeling, going back to the class as a community. (June, 2011)

Joan

We play games where the point is not to win, but to be the most cohesive group. (June, 2011)

Alice

I like to have students who I know might be more capable, or have experience in the certain thing that someone is going through something or has struggled with something. I think flexible groupings are a really great way and I've had quite a few students who are natural leaders, but not just leaders in the sense that the group follows but...for such a young age maybe they have more experience in life situations and I think putting them into groups...has been helpful. (July, 2011)

The first theme identified for this question was *community*. Students are given various roles to develop a sense of belonging and community through shared ownership for what happens in the classroom. For example, all classrooms used group work opportunities. Exactly what this looks like varied by classroom. In Mary's classroom students were taught directly how to give and receive feedback when working in a group. Joan integrated these skills into a class game, where the objective was not to win or get the answer correct necessarily, but to work as a cohesive group, the goal being to practice the skills of listening to one another. In this same classroom there was a prize system to reward students for stepping up to help others.

A second theme had to do with *real teachable moments* where educators identified using real situations to discuss and/or model compassion for students.

Mary

If you want to say something there's a feeling that you will be supported. And I really have established that, and it's not to say there hasn't been some child you know... presenting something or saying something and someone laughed and not to say I'm hard about it, but it's something we talk about right then and there. (June, 2011)

Alice

Strategies that I would use to make sure that they are cared for, um is to show my care and concern for students...coaching is a really great example of that, showing compassion for certain things that happen in a family, or in a classroom. (July, 2011)

A final theme was one of *safety for risk-taking*. Joan and Mary indicated that it is important to establish a culture where it is acceptable to make mistakes and that students need to feel supported if they are to feel they belong and are cared for by others. This extends to ensuring that all voices are heard in the classroom

Joan

Sometimes I ask the students a question, they may get stuck, so I give their peers an opportunity to help —this makes everyone feel supported, it's ok not to know the answer, we can help each other. (June, 2011)

Mary

I want to make sure that everybody feels comfortable being a part of this classroom and if you want to say something and if you make a mistake, it's ok. So it's discussions and role modeling that...Make sure that everyone is included, because it's easy to go for the ones that—you know what I mean, you have [sorta] natural leaders in there that are talkative, so that's sort of me as well, have I included so and so in this decision? (June, 2011)

4. What do you find most challenging about trying to establish this condition in your classroom?

Joan

Attitudes and personalities – just like adults not all want to work together so sometimes just need to get on with it. Try to 'pick pairs' and will discuss why it might be important to be able to work with someone you don't get along with. (June, 2011)

Alice

I guess it would be the best thing in the world if everyone followed the compassionate lead. Sometimes I think the biggest challenge is getting to that point with some of the students. And sometimes it's their experience that prevents them from showing that compassion or experience that they've had, and whether it's with teachers or classrooms or coaches and they're resistant to showing it. (July, 2011)

The initial theme identified in the responses to this question was awareness of different *student aptitudes*. Both Joan and Alice highlighted that despite modeling and

practicing compassion and collaboration with others, the tendency for some students to follow through in practice differs. This led to the theme of *time* being identified. Time was discussed in two regards, first, referring to the time required for students to evolve and develop the target skills, and second the time needed for educators to maintain the practices they have established throughout the entire school year. For example, come May or June, when it tends to be busy and people may be tired, not to give a student the answer to resolve a problem they have but to find the time to talk with them and help them to resolve it themselves.

Mary

I think that would be the challenge, that you need to take the time and be consistent in the way you handle situations, versus you know what I'm tired, I'm just going to tell you how it is. (June, 2011)

Joan

There are two strong personalities in this classroom so asking them 'how they felt' when someone does x....helps to set example and one has made positive changes, the other isn't there yet...I model it for them. (June, 2011)

**Interpersonal Skill Development.** The following two questions were intended to explore educator beliefs about how to develop and maintain positive relationships:

5. What do you believe to be the most effective ways to establish and maintain positive relationships among all members of this learning community?

Mary

You take an interest outside—it makes a more positive relationship even just with adults, because I think its role modeling that.... So If I'm taking the time, and talking and joking, the kids need to see that – they need to see the respectfulness, they need to see the tone, what I say – so if I'm doing that consistently with kids or other teachers, they're going to see that, and I think it's also pointing it out to them. (June, 2011)

Joan

I try to model and have the best attitude possible. They see me when I feel frustrated and then lighten the mood. Trying to be empathic—the notion of being in 'someone else's shoes' is often used and I highlight this for others to see when it happens. (June, 2011)

Alice

I think it goes back to practicing what you preach . . . I think that's an important, and effective way to help with establishing those things—leading by example. (July, 2011)

The main theme revealed for this question was *role modeling*. The educators interviewed all referred to needing to model what they wanted and expected to see from their students. Mary went into great detail describing not only what you say as important, but how you say it also.

Another theme identified had to do with *genuine concern for others*. How this concern was demonstrated varied between educators, from showing empathy and

highlighting it for students to see, to being open and approachable for students and staff and knowing their students.

Alice

I think if they know that you are interested—you take an interest outside—it makes a more positive relationship, even with adults...you've got to have some kind of connection. (July, 2011)

Mary

So when I am interacting there is a genuineness of wanting to know them. (June, 2011)

6. When students have conflicts what, is it you feel they should be advised to do?

Joan

It depends on the students: so I'd say it's case by case. Early in the year they come to me; then gradually try to wean them off that...for some, they aren't able to do it on their own, so I advise them to see a teacher because it won't go well otherwise. (June, 2011)

Mary

Actually I've been more aware too, not even just for conflicts, but just for questions, so a goal for them was to—'let's see if you can work this out for yourselves'. If I thought they had the tools to do it... I'd say, let's see if you can work this out yourself. And there's no black and white in that... there's probably times where I probably should have let them do it and vice versa, it's just trying to sort of sense it. I think it depends on what the conflict is too—because if it's something you know, physical or goes

beyond, you know, I need to be involved...depends on the severity of it.  
(June, 2011)

Alice

Oftentimes I'll have students come with an issue, and the first thing I tell them, just as I would tell my own children: You've got to express what your concern is, you've got to let each other know whatever it is, what's on your mind, or what's bothering them. (July, 2011)

The main theme in educator responses to this question was *competency*. Each of the educators identified that students may come to them looking for an answer but that in most cases (unless there was extreme conflict involved or the educator didn't believe the necessary skills were present in the student), their preferred response was to encourage students to talk to one another to resolve their dispute.

A related theme was the need for *modeling/giving support* for this process. Joan and Alice commented directly on either teaching students the strategies for having this discussion or being present to model or support a student who may not have well-developed problem-solving skills.

Joan

Sometimes I just need to be standing there – and don't need to say anything at all for them to work through the problem. (June, 2011)

Alice

So I always try and give them strategies first to discuss with one another.  
(July, 2011)



The final theme noted was one of *progressive steps*. Mary and Alice commented that they may start with the strategy of encouraging independent problem solving with the peer, but that if the problem persisted, or they sensed discomfort with the task, they would join the discussion either to mediate, or sometimes just as a presence. This was informal in terms of a process. The importance of knowing your students to make these judgments with some accuracy is implied.

Mary

I think it depends on what the conflict is too – because if it’s something you know, physical or goes beyond, you know, I need to be involved... depends on the severity of it. (June, 2011)

Alice

So I always try and give them strategies first to discuss with one another. If they come back, which sometimes happens, or if they are uncomfortable doing that then I will suggest to the two parties involved you know, that I can be the mediator and we can discuss it together to come to some kind of solution. (July, 2011)

**Socio-moral Orientations.** The following two questions were intended to elucidate educator beliefs and practices specifically aimed at distinguishing between moral and social convention matters:

7. In your view, why should teachers help students differentiate between moral and social convention issues? Is this important? Why? or Why not?

Joan

I don’t differentiate between social convention and moral issues I don’t think. I tend to talk about things from a moral point of view: “How do you

think x feels?” for example...I might be making it moral when it’s social. I’ve found it difficult to differentiate maybe because I grew up in a very homogeneous community...it wasn’t as apparent when things were unjust. As a child, I was told I needed to do something and was never told why. . . in my experience, boys especially, need to be given the purpose to understand. (June, 2011)

Alice

First of all I think it is important for teachers to differentiate between the two...cause I think if you’re getting involved in something that is social—it doesn’t always reflect what your moral beliefs are, I don’t think. Especially teenagers may be getting swayed by what’s going on around them and then after a situation happens and they reflect on it that’s when they might come to me and say, “I feel awful that I did this,” because they had a chance to reflect on that moral part of it...and “this isn’t something I would normally have done.” I definitely think that it is important for teachers to help to identify the differences you know and not just because you made a bad choice does it mean you are a bad person. (July, 2011)

Mary

I don’t know if I’m consciously doing that but there is a difference. It goes for that empathy part...you’ve got to get them to feel for that other person you know... um, but I think, it’s maybe harder to do, just thinking this through, and it’s easier to do more of the concrete—line up, put your books away, quiet...(June, 2011)

All three educators felt that making the distinction between moral and social convention matters was important, but, commented that they weren't sure they were consciously doing that, Joan went as far as to say she wasn't distinguishing between moral and social convention matters. Mary was pretty sure she was using moral reasoning for a multitude of situations, as she put it, to try to encourage greater empathy, a theme that evolved in the following question regarding how these educators go about the task. Thus the main theme was one of the *value in the work*. Exactly what the work entailed was not entirely consistent. Joan stated that it is important for students to understand why we do or don't do something, that giving rules without reasons is insufficient to govern action (implying that to say something is wrong to do also requires clarification as to why—is there a rule, or is it morally wrong?). Alice alluded to the importance of helping students decipher complex situations where they may find themselves feeling badly for their choices, so that students do not start believing they are bad people. What was implied was the presence of guilty feelings for wrongdoing. When pressed about whether a student's awareness of wrongdoing might vary by different ages, Alice responded:

Um, no I don't think so . . . I think sometimes with the little ones they don't necessarily understand . . . they don't know the depth of their morality, so maybe when something happens they aren't as quick to realize—but I think they get that queasy feeling and I know that with my own children, they get that queasy feeling of 'oh, it doesn't feel good that I did that,' but they can't identify why—maybe they're not as quick to realize, but I think the realization will come for them.

(July, 2011)

How do you go about this in your classroom?

Joan

It's always talking – going the route of empathy, putting one's self in other's shoes... I give examples using different students who might have different experiences and ask would you want to be treated like x? Trying to raise their awareness about the situation and feelings. (June, 2011)

Alice

I think it comes with, I wouldn't necessarily say specific to curriculum, but in the way that you maybe handle, I don't know, a health class, is a good example, where a student might ask me a question. (July, 2011)

Mary

Modeling it when some real examples come about...if something happened in that classroom you stop for that couple minutes, and say, you know what, here's an incident that just happened right now, let's talk about it...so don't think it's these big lessons, but informal, impromptu, based on what is happening in your classroom, to stop for a couple minutes and respond to it. (June, 2011)

The main theme in these responses was a need for *reality-based learning*. Each educator commented on using real-life situations rather than a formal lesson, “Today we are going to talk about—you have to be moral,” as one educator phrased it. Instead, it is the impromptu lessons that should be the backbone of this learning.

A second theme related to *empathy*. Two of the educators commented

on the need to create or draw attention to opportunities for students to try to feel what another might be feeling, to elicit feelings of care and concern for others. This, they felt, was directly tied to creating a sense of community, a goal in each of their classrooms.

Joan

It's always talking – going the route of empathy, putting one's self in other's shoes.... (June, 2011)

Mary

It goes for that empathy part...you've got to get them to feel for that other person you know...I think it goes to that developing community and feeling support for each other. (June, 2011)

Additionally, Joan and Mary both commented on the challenge in this task, stating that *preparation* had not been provided. Joan, "I never learned this in Teacher's College" and Mary said, "Maybe it's harder to do (meaning differentiate between moral and social matters), and it's easier to do more of the concrete, line up, put your books away, quiet, kind of thing"

**Confirmation of student behaviour.** The following final question, was intended to gather educator perspective on the skills of their students in resolving interpersonal conflict on a day to day basis:

8. How would you describe the actions of your students day to day and in situations of conflict?

Joan

These students don't hold grudges. There is no retribution in this class...

There is some follow the leader type behavior...when you talk to them and

raise their awareness about the choices they make, like who they choose to spend time with, “when x gets in trouble and you choose to hang out with them...what happens”...Some students have learned to walk away from these problems. (June, 2011)

Alice

You compare them to last year’s group and there wasn’t a lot of conflict resolution, and we had a lot of issues, and so all of the things that you and I have previously talked about, were much more challenging last year—I don’t think the kids last year had as effective conflict resolution skills as this year’s group did. (July, 2011)

Mary

I think for the most part, they can, I guess they’re probably working a lot of it out because its not like it’s the first and foremost thing in my mind. I probably don’t spend enough time with these kids on the skills but I think they have them...I don’t know, I guess I shouldn’t assume that...I guess I am assuming that because I have been in other schools where it’s huge and I would take way more time probably out of teaching time to do that vs. here, it can be pretty quick. (June, 2011)

A theme from responses to this question was one of *skill set variability*. Alice and Mary responded that this year’s cohort of students seemed a strong group with respect to resolving and dealing with conflict generally. They seemed to have the necessary skills, and so they did not spend a great deal of time dealing with conflict in the classroom. Joan’s remark about students not holding grudges and understanding each day is a fresh

start would seem to imply that any problems that students encounter are quickly resolved, and not carried over from one day to the next possibly growing in intensity. When probed as to why Alice felt her students possessed the skills needed to resolve conflicts effectively, she commented that in comparison with the previous year's cohort, there was little accountability coming from home in the previous year. "I can't say with certainty, but my impression was there was no accountability coming from home." She also expressed that in the previous year, there was not a lot of consistency among the staff in modeling good conflict resolution.

As Mary described, there is a need to support students to feel confident to deal with conflicts that they encounter and yet feel comfortable to report any problems so that problems do not go undetected for months at a time. The theme of *confidence* was therefore also noted.

Mary

And you know what it was, it was for them to develop the confidence to say, you can work this out—you don't need me. Now I wouldn't do that with everybody, but for them—you've got the confidence, you have the skills and strategies to deal with this. (June, 2011)

A visual representation of the highlighted connections between identified themes through the analysis of educator interview transcripts is presented in Figure 17. This representation illustrates the clusters of themes identified in the transcripts. It begins with the theme of collaboration, a process used by all interview participants to establish the rules or expectations of the classroom each fall. These expectations, when not adhered to, are addressed in ways that maintain student dignity. Students are consulted in the process

of establishing the expectations in the classroom and, as such, have a sense of ownership and feelings of autonomy in the operation of the classroom environment. The ability to make decisions and govern one's choices, along with feelings of responsibility and ownership serve to reinforce a feeling of community. This sense of belonging to a community is strengthened through positive role modeling, creating a culture where it is safe to take risks and make mistakes. This safety is achieved through genuine caring for one another.

As reflected in their responses to specific items from the UIC questionnaire, and their interviews, participants' experiences/backgrounds may have played a role in their pedagogical development. To illustrate, each of the three interviewed educators is described below.

Joan

Joan is a Grade 3 teacher in an urban setting. She has between 6 and 9 years experience in the classroom. Joan shared from her own upbringing that because she was from a fairly homogenous cultural community, she might struggle to differentiate between moral and social convention matters, having not been exposed to real injustice herself. She believes that the distinction should be easier to see today because of racial and gender issues present in society. This may be particularly true in her urban setting. She believes that she can use regular curriculum to discuss moral issues as indicated on Item 3 in Part B of her questionnaire.

Her practices indicate a belief that students need to be active participants and that the teacher is ultimately responsible for managing the classroom, suggesting power is not equally balanced, perhaps a remnant of her upbringing and schooling experience. She



believes she can instruct students in how to be more considerate of others and in how to influence students' concepts of fairness and concern of others, as indicated on her responses to Items 6 and 7 respectively in Part B of the UIC questionnaire. To help instruct students in matters related to their interpersonal skills, she uses a formal reward system (reinforced school wide), games to practice skills such as listening to others, and role-modeling, where she is in control. However, she is uncertain how to influence student compassion (Item 28, Part B of the UIC questionnaire) and when students become more compassionate toward others, she is uncertain about whether this is due to a caring classroom environment (Item 26, Part B of the UIC questionnaire).

Her practice of treating most things as moral, by asking students how they would feel, trying to elicit that compassion for another may serve to reinforce positive relations in her class but would not likely help students differentiate the reason to do something is sometimes simply because it serves to maintain order (e.g., lining up for a drink at the fountain). This was evident in Item 10 on her questionnaire for example where she indicated that her response to noise in the classroom would be to draw attention to the impact on others rather than highlight the difference between inside and outside voices. However, she believes she can use rules and everyday interactions with students in her classroom to influence student understanding of the purpose behind shared conventions and social norms (Item 31, Part B of the UIC questionnaire).

#### Mary

Mary is a Grade 3 teacher in a rural setting. She has more than 12 years experience in the classroom. Mary identified that she thinks some of her practices are simply because of who she is and that they come as natural to her. Mary was at one time involved with a program intended to teach empathy skills to children using an infant (Roots of

Empathy©) and so it is perhaps not surprising that the thrust of her responses indicate a need for her to establish positive caring relationships with her students and among her students, in which empathy figures prominently. For example, on Item 9 of Part A of the UIC questionnaire, Mary indicated the way to respond to a student who just hurt another is to highlight the fact that they hurt someone and ask how they might feel in such a situation. Mary believes that she ultimately must guide her students to making good choices, whether it is in determining the rules of the classroom, or in resolving conflict, she listens to her students and then helps to reframe their thinking without necessarily dictating what they should think. This was reinforced with Item 8 of Part A of the UIC questionnaire where she indicated she would engage students in discussion to help them construct their own solution to a conflict.

Mary's interview responses indicate that dealing with social convention matters are much more simplistic (and easier) because they are often more concrete. Matters pertaining to moral principles require an element of caring between people, however, if these relationships are in place dealing with the social convention issues should be simplified further. The implication is that a connection between people will help to make things run smoothly as a bi-product of how they interact with one another. Mary is at times uncertain of her abilities to influence students in this way. For example, Item 3, Part B of the UIC questionnaire she indicated she was uncertain as to how to best use the curriculum to generate moral discussions with students (this response is reinforced with Item 17, Part B of the UIC questionnaire) and on Item 10 of Part B, UIC questionnaire, she was uncertain how to use classroom procedural rules to develop students' understanding of social conventions. She does however believe she has the skills to

influence students' concept of fairness and concern for others, as indicated on Item 7 of Part B of the UIC questionnaire, and can do so with every day interactions (Item 30, Part B of the UIC questionnaire). Perhaps the distinction in her confidence to have these kinds of influence is related more to the use of specific curriculum.

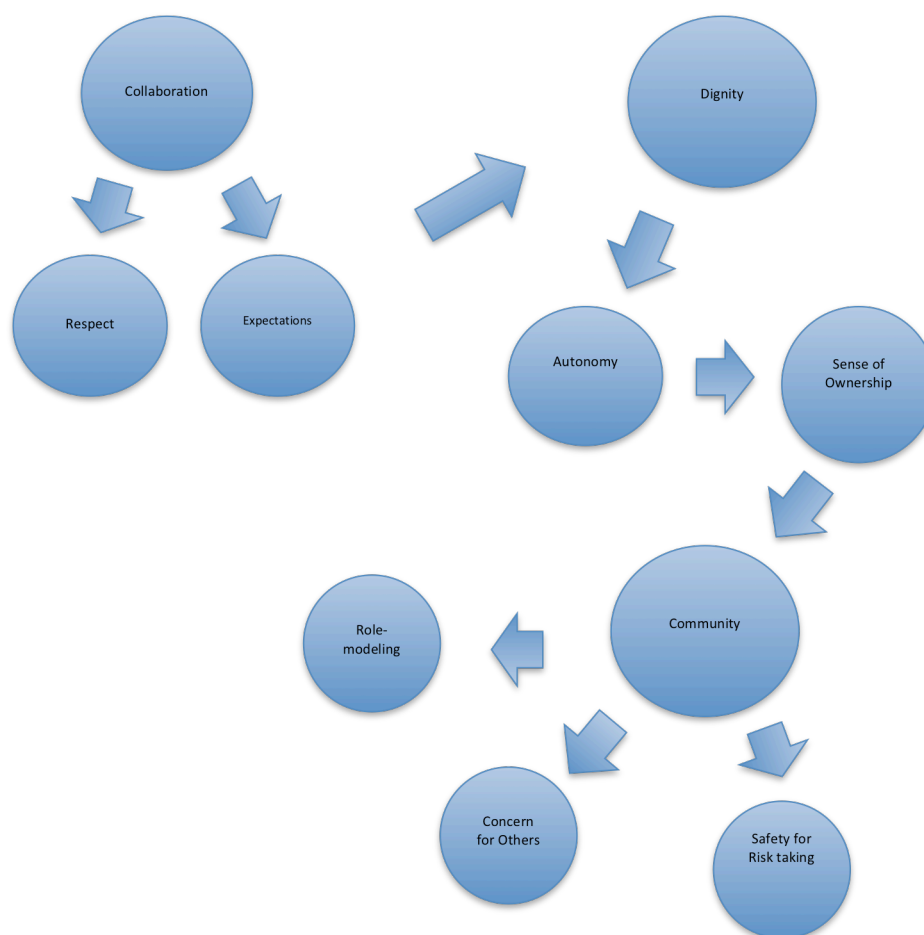
However, she is not certain she can use the rules of her classroom to instruct students in the purpose of shared conventions or social norms (Item 31, Part B of the UIC questionnaire) or that she is finding better ways to engage students in their moral development (Item 32, Part B of the UIC questionnaire). Mary had also indicated during the interview that she had never been taught these things and was at times uncertain as to how to best proceed to support students.

Alice

Alice teaches Grade 8 in a rural setting. She has more than 12 years experience in the classroom. She views her role as an educator to include setting a good example for students to model their interpersonal skills after. She strives to lead by example. Alice also recognizes that she has a responsibility to instruct students in skills that may not be well developed such as conflict resolution strategies, and deciphering between matters of moral principle and social conventions. This is reinforced with Item 8 of Part A of the UIC questionnaire, where she indicated to respond to students in conflict the best course of action is to engage them in discussion to help them construct their own solution, and on Item 9 of Part A of the UIC questionnaire, where to respond to a child who has hit another child she would highlight the harm caused. When addressing excessive noise in the classroom she uses the reminder of inside versus outside voices, rather than highlight the impact of their choice on others (Item 11, Part B of the UIC questionnaire). In her examples during the interview however, her references to social matters were less related to rules to maintain a sense of

order, and more to do with the influences of society (or a social group of peers) that might conflict with what an individual believes is right for themselves. This may be a function of the fact that she works primarily with adolescents, an age group that is typically very affected by their social group.

Alice indicated she values student input in the workings of the classroom and sees herself as the filter to ensure student input is not in conflict with what she believes is reasonable or right. She indicated on Item 3, Part B of the UIC questionnaire that she strongly believes she can use regular curriculum to generate moral discussion and that she knows how to influence students' concept of fairness and concern for others (Item 7, Part B of the UIC questionnaire). In Item 10, Part B of the UIC questionnaire she indicated that she feels well prepared to use classroom rules to develop students' understanding of social conventions. Alice believes strongly that the creation of a trusting classroom environment can influence moral beliefs of children (Item 20, Part B of the UIC questionnaire) and compassion for others (Item 26, Part B of the UIC questionnaire). Alice is confident in her abilities to use everyday interactions with students to develop their sense of fairness (Item 30, Part B of the UIC questionnaire) and can use the rules of her classroom to help students learn the purpose of shared conventions and social norms (Item 31, Part B of the UIC questionnaire). Any issues that conflict with her beliefs are discussed with students to explain her thinking but ultimately it seems it will be her beliefs that are enforced.



*Figure 11.* Interview themes mind map.

These are the themes identified through the content analyses of three educator interviews.

### **Summary of Key Findings**

The key findings from this investigation are categorized as quantitative or qualitative and are reported in the following paragraphs. Findings related to the educator participants are limited to the qualitative domain only, where findings related to student participants are both quantitative and qualitative in nature.

#### **Quantitative Findings**

2 (gender) x 3 (grade) ANOVAs completed for each of the nine scales from the student questionnaire revealed significant main effects for influence, intrinsic, and extrinsic scales, but no significant interactions between gender and grade were noted. Considering class differences through 1 x 7 ANOVAs revealed significant differences among classes on the following scales: influence, sense of school community, extrinsic, and intrinsic motivation. Post Hoc analysis for the influence scale revealed significant differences between the Grade 8 students in the rural setting, the Grade 3 students in the suburban setting, and the Grade 3 students of the rural setting. Post Hoc analysis on the extrinsic motivation scale indicated the difference was between the urban Grade 3 class and both the suburban and rural Grade 8 classes. Post Hoc analysis on the intrinsic motivation scale indicated a significant difference between the Grade 8 and Grade 3 classes in the rural setting. A pattern was also noted for mean scores from the autonomy and influence scales. The Grade 8 class from the rural setting had the highest level of autonomy ( $M = 2.49$ ) and the lowest level was in a Grade 3 class from the urban setting. Influence showed a similar pattern, again with the Grade 8 class from the rural setting having the highest level of influence ( $M = 3.17$ ) and the lowest level of influence is again in a Grade 3 class, however, it is a suburban class ( $M = 1.58$ ).

Correlational analyses indicated a number of significant relations among the nine scales of the student questionnaire, measuring *beliefs* and *desires*. Of note, influence was negatively correlated with extrinsic motivation. Also, sense of school community was positively correlated with social competence, conflict resolution, and intrinsic motivation. Finally, intrinsic motivation was positively correlated with sense of school community, social competence, and extrinsic motivation. Further examination of student responses according to gender and grade revealed additional correlations of value.

First, within the variable, gender, supportiveness and sense of school community scales are significantly related for both female and male students, however, for female students, supportiveness was also related to autonomy, where for the males it was related to social competence. Exploring the strength of the correlations using Fisher Z scores indicated for females the correlation between supportiveness and sense of school community was significantly stronger than for males. Further, only the females had a negative correlation. The relation between influence and extrinsic motivation was negative.

Finally, for the variable, grade, there were two differences of note. For Grade 8 students, supportiveness, sense of school community, and influence were all related to social competence. A negative relationship between social competence and extrinsic motivation was identified for the Grade 5 participants only.

### **Qualitative Findings**

Investigating student beliefs and desires further with qualitative data resulted in notable findings for grade and gender.

To begin with *beliefs*, a notable difference in the frequency of responses that indicated a coordination of moral and social convention domains was identified among the three target grades. The responses of Grade 3 students indicated a strong preference for the social convention domain in their decision-making when compared to Grade 5 and Grade 8 student responses. Thus, differences in student tendency to prioritize or coordinate social convention and/or moral elements are distinguishable based on grade.

Examining students' responses to Vignette 1 thematically, it was noted that several students would return the money they found because it was something they would want someone to do for them, or because they believed the person who lost it would need it. Other students simply indicated it was the right or respectful thing to do. Some responses to Vignette 2 that highlighted a moral principle indicated the human welfare aspect of the problem was the greater concern, where other responses also included the justice aspect of the conflict. Finally, where some students indicated they would go to an adult to get help with the problem, others indicated they would manage the conflict independently without adult intervention.

Looking at the vignettes thematically revealed differences according to grade. In Vignette 1 specifically, Grade 3 students indicated they would return the money because it was nice and to avoid getting into trouble. Among Grade 5 responses the notion that the person who lost it might need it surfaced. Returning the money in case someone needed it, or because they would want someone to do the same for them was noted among the Grade 8 responses, however, there were four responses that also indicated circumstances where they would keep the money. Where a moral principle was given priority among Grade 3 responses to Vignette 2, it was justice, more than human welfare that was



emphasized. Results suggested that Grade 5 students were less certain of their best course of action. For example, some participants indicated they would seek help from a teacher, others acknowledged it wasn't their problem to get involved in. These responses may have indicated that students were choosing to put their own welfare ahead of others, weighing the potential risks (e.g., physical or social harm) for themselves if they were to become involved. This theme grew stronger among the grade 8 responses, which indicated circumstances where they would not get involved, (e.g., if they did not like or know the students).

Compared to males, female students' responses indicated that to return the money was the right thing to do, to be helpful. An additional theme, to avoid trouble or feelings of guilt was also noted. In responding to Vignette 2 female students indicated a desire to avoid harm, either for others, or themselves and so they would get an adult for help. Male students were more willing to get involved directly to avoid wasting the playing time of the game, some physically.

While the incidence of student responses that prioritized relations was high among grade and gender variables, across both Vignettes 1 and 2, the Grade 8 students were the least likely to prioritize a relationship in their decision making but were the most likely to combine their reasoning, assessing potential risks/gains for themselves and their relationships with others in their decision making. Finally, while it might be expected that female students would prioritize relationships, it was the male students who did so with the greatest frequency. Female student responses indicated a stronger preference for combining relationships with their assessment of risk/gain for themselves.

Vignette 1 responses suggested that some Grade 3 students were very clear that to keep the found money would be stealing and said they would return the money because it was the nice thing to do, but also to avoid a negative consequence. Grade 5 students' responses featured a theme of reciprocity—acting because they would want someone to do the same for them, whereas Grade 8 students' responses reflected a theme of a need to be viewed positively by others, and to develop positive peer relationships. Grade 3 students' responses to Vignette 2 indicated a desire to maintain conditions where people can have fun playing a friendly game of soccer. The reciprocity noted among Grade 5 student responses to Vignette 1, was replaced with desire to avoid conflict. This was viewed as relational because conflict does not normally lend itself to positive relationships with others. Grade 8 students, by taking control to end the conflict, may have anticipated being viewed positively, which would garner them greater positive relationships.

Female students' responses indicated a desire to be viewed positively by others. Those we view positively are more likely to be counted among our friends and therefore this motivation was viewed as relational in nature. While both male and female responses to Vignette 2 were viewed as relational, the nature of the motivation was slightly varied. The female students wanted to maintain peace, and so acted to bring the conflict to an end. Male students wanted to maintain the game—having fun, and so acted to end the conflict so the game could continue. Again, the planned actions of students may have been similar, however the motivation driving the judgment was found to vary slightly.

From the individual item analysis conducted for the educator questionnaire a few noteworthy observations were made about their knowledge of moral development. Every educator indicated an understanding of “morality as direct reciprocity” being formed

between ages 3 and 5 and an understanding of conventions as aspects of social systems being formed during elementary school. Responses as to how they would deal with student conflict confirmed that most (not all) would use domain concordant discussion with students to assist them in forming their own solutions rather than provide them one.

With respect to educator beliefs and sense of efficacy additional observations were made. Most educators (71%) indicated they know how to use strategies to help change students' concepts of fairness and concern for others. Further, 86% believed they could positively influence the moral development of a child and 71% indicated the creation of a trusting classroom environment would be influential in a child's moral orientation. Almost half (43%) indicated uncertainty in how to create lessons consistent with moral and conventional domain issues yet, 57% answered *strongly agree*, indicating a confidence in their ability to use everyday interactions to develop students' sense of fairness. One further observation, one educator, with 12+ years experience from a school community having a mid range economic level, instructed her students weekly in moral lessons, and yet identified she was uncertain as to how to continuously improve ways she engaged students in their own moral development.

From the educator interviews, the following themes are of greatest interest and appeared in responses from each of the educator participants who participated in interviews. The themes of: collaboration, autonomy for students, community building, role modeling, building competency, and the value in teaching moral and social conventions as different, using reality-based learning not just curriculum material were identified (although each commented they were not sure they were treating moral and social convention matters differently). Each of these themes touched on aspects of the

student participant data set collected through the student questionnaire, including the social vignette open response questions.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided a summary of the data analyses for the current investigation. Included were quantitative findings for the student participants, including descriptive and inferential statistics, (ANOVAs and correlational analyses). All statistical analyses were performed to a 95% confidence interval. To further elaborate on the quantitative findings, qualitative data were also incorporated. Student responses to the questionnaire vignettes were coded and tallied before they were analyzed thematically to check for gender and grade differences or trends. Qualitative data also included descriptive statistics from the modified UIC questionnaire completed by the educator participants. Exploration for differences in moral development knowledge, as well as beliefs and sense of efficacy related to character education were conducted descriptively. Additionally, educator responses to individual UIC questionnaire items were examined for any trends or differences (refer to Tables 17 and 18 and Appendix F for full details). Responses to specific items from the UIC questionnaire were highlighted in the analysis of the three educator interviews as support for the interpretation of educator participants' interview responses.

To explore for any differences in socio-moral reasoning of student participants according to grade and gender, 2 x 3 ANOVAs were conducted using student questionnaire scales as dependent variables. There were no significant interactions noted. Social competence, intrinsic, and extrinsic motivation scales were explored separately for grade and gender differences with one-way ANOVAs, as they each pertain to a specific

aspect of socio-moral reasoning (belief or desire) and indicated significant variances. Finally, 1 x 7 ANOVAs were used to explore differences by classroom and indicated significant differences among classes on the influence, sense of school community, extrinsic, and intrinsic motivation scales. For all ANOVAs where significant main effects were noted Post Hoc analyses were conducted to identify the nature of the variance. For example, following the 1 x 7 ANOVA significant effect for influence, the Post Hoc analysis indicated significant differences between the Grade 8 students in the rural setting, the Grade 3 students in the suburban setting, and the Grade 3 students of the rural setting. The significant effect for extrinsic motivation indicated the difference was between the urban Grade 3 class and both the suburban and rural Grade 8 classes through Post Hoc analyses.

Correlational analyses were conducted using Pearson product moment tests of correlation to explore for any relations among the student questionnaire scales for the total sample ( $N = 68$ ). Further correlations were conducted by sorting the data on gender and grade and revealed a number of differences for the relationships among the student scales. For example, the supportiveness scale was positively correlated with sense of school community and autonomy for the female students, where for the male students, supportiveness was positively related to sense of school community and social competence. Where common significant correlations were identified (e.g., the correlation between sense of school community and supportiveness for both male and female participants), Fisher Z tests were conducted to determine whether the difference between significant correlations for the two groups was significant. This was the case for only one

pair of correlations, sense of school community and supportiveness, for female participants when compared with male counterparts.

When data were sorted on grade and Pearson correlations conducted, further differences in the significant correlations were identified. For example, the Grade 8 participants' responses resulted in significant positive correlations between social competence and the influence, supportiveness, and sense of school community scales, where for the Grade 5 participants, social competence was positively correlated with conflict resolution and intrinsic motivation scales and negatively correlated with extrinsic motivation.

To explore for any differences in students' judgment to subordinate and or coordinate social and moral domains in complex social situations (beliefs/rationale), students' responses to the first two open-response vignette questions were coded, tallied, and reported first as frequencies and percentages. This process was also followed to explore the priority given to relations or instrumental gain potential (desires/motivation). To expand on the nature of students' socio-moral beliefs and desires, thematic content analyses were conducted on the vignette responses. These analyses were conducted for each vignette to explore for differences and/or commonalities according to grade and gender.

Educator questionnaire responses were explored descriptively for any differences in knowledge of moral development theory and sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education. Specifically, educator responses were examined for differences according to setting, grade taught, and years teaching. The educators' responses for each individual item were also investigated. From these analyses several items were highlighted. For example, an item to indicate level of confidence in influencing student concepts of fairness and concern for others and another to measure frequency of "moral

lessons.” Responses to the confidence item indicated that overall educators with a midrange experience level (between 3 and 12 years) rated the item most positively. The two teachers who indicated they believed strongly in their ability to influence student concepts of fairness and concern for others, each taught Grade 5, one from the suburban setting, and one from the urban setting. Differences in the frequency of ‘moral lessons’ were identified in relation to total scores of educators on Part B of their questionnaire. Educators with the highest levels on the sense of efficacy and beliefs scale also reported conducting “moral lessons” daily with students. Each of the Grade 5 teachers identified above, along with a Grade 8 teacher in the rural setting reported conducting these lessons daily.

Descriptive data from the educator questionnaire were further supplemented with analysis of the educator interviews. Using the educator questionnaire, the student questionnaire, and the educator interviews, common themes were identified (see Figure 1 for visual representation).

In sum, statistically significant findings were obtained through this investigation for grade/classroom, and gender indicating differences related to these independent variables. First, measuring student socio-moral reasoning, specifically desire to act prosocially, resulted in a significant effect for grade. The youngest students (Grade 3) were as motivated by intrinsic as extrinsic rewards, where the eldest students (Grade 8) were least motivated by extrinsic rewards. A significant difference was noted between the urban Grade 3 classroom and both the rural and suburban Grade 8 classrooms. The highest level of extrinsic motivation was noted in the Grade 3 classroom from the urban setting and was significantly different from the extrinsic motivation reported for both the rural and suburban Grade 8 classes. Significant differences in student ratings of influence

were also noted between the rural Grade 8 classroom, and the Grade 3 classrooms from both the suburban setting, and the rural setting.

Additionally, a number of significant correlations among student questionnaire scales were identified. When explored further, sorting the data on independent variables (gender and grade), there were a number of differences identified in the correlations among the scales. Using Fisher Z tests, correlations between sense of school community and supportiveness, identified as significant correlations for both male and female participants, were found to differ significantly between genders. These findings along with identified trends are discussed in Chapter 5.



## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION**

The purpose of this investigation was to explore relations between educator knowledge of moral development, their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education, and the socio-moral reasoning of students. To this end, seven research questions were developed: a) Are there relations between educator knowledge of moral development and sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education? b) Do educator sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education differ based on school setting, years of experience, or grade taught? c) Is there a difference in socio-moral reasoning (belief aspect) of student participants based on learning conditions? d) Is there a difference in socio-moral reasoning (desire aspect) of student participants based on learning conditions? e) Under what conditions are students likely to subordinate and or coordinate social and moral domains in complex social situations? f) Under what conditions do students report behaviour consistent with caring relationships? g) What, if any, relation exists between socio-moral reasoning and reported behaviour of students across participating elementary schools relative to participant described school culture and educational pedagogy implemented in participating classrooms?

This chapter is divided into four sections to address these seven questions and the educational implications from this investigation. The first section presents the findings in the context of each question from the current investigation. Next, the findings are discussed in the context of the hypotheses posed and, where appropriate, these hypotheses are confirmed or disconfirmed. The third section discusses the significant quantitative and noteworthy qualitative findings from this study and offers some possible explanations for the findings, using a social cognitive moral development theory, domain

theory (Nucci & Turiel, 2009), a social information-processing model (Crick & Dodge, 1994), as well as a bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000) and systems relational metatheory of human development (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008) as a combined framework. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the educational implications of the present investigation, including what needs to be known for future research.

### **Discussion Related to Research Questions**

Following are the seven questions from the current investigation, along with relevant points for discussion:

1. Are there relations between educator knowledge of moral development and sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education?

To explore for any patterns of interrelatedness, educator scores for Part A, the moral development knowledge portion of their questionnaire, and Part B, the sense of efficacy and beliefs portion were to be correlated. However, due to the small sample size ( $N = 7$ ) this test was not conducted. The moral development TTL (dependent variable) was explored descriptively using the independent variables (years teaching, setting, and grade taught) to identify any differences among the participating educators. Every item from this scale was explored separately for each educator participant. Of note each educator believes children develop an understanding of morality between the ages of 3 and 5 years, and this appears with recognition of direct reciprocity. Additionally 4 of the educators believe students begin to recognize conventions as part of social systems in elementary school years. The remaining 3 educators believe this understanding is formed pre-elementary school. Only 71% of educators reported feeling confident in their abilities to change students' concepts of fairness and concern for others and 43% were uncertain

how to identify moral and social convention domain issues in the curriculum, or how to create lessons consistent with moral and social convention domain issues. Despite knowing that reciprocity is the earliest foundation of morality, and that social conventions come to be known during elementary school year (if not before), not all educators reported feeling confident in their abilities to support student learning in the realms of moral and social convention.

2. Does educator sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education differ based on school setting, years of experience, or grade taught?

Again, due to the small sample size, this question cannot be answered quantitatively. Descriptively, educator beliefs and sense of efficacy were explored alongside practices and revealed greater similarities than differences, with two notable differences. Each of the seven educators reported a belief they can positively influence a child's moral development (86% agree, 14% strongly agree), and 71% see the creation of a trusting classroom as influential in this work. Each educator also believes they can use everyday interactions to develop a sense of fairness and respect for others among students. However, item 7 from Part B, the Sense of Efficacy and Beliefs scale, asks educators to rate their agreement with the following statement: "I know how to use strategies that might lead to changes in students' concepts of fairness and concern for others." Responses indicated that educators with the greatest experience (12+ years) were not necessarily the most confident. The two most confident educators were from the suburban and the urban settings, a male and a female respectively, and each taught Grade 5.

The frequency of “moral lessons,” was examined along with educator sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education. The educators with the highest score on the efficacy and beliefs scale, were from the urban (137) and rural (140) settings, and taught Grade 5 and 8 respectively, each reported conducting “moral lessons” daily with their students. A third educator reported conducting moral lessons daily, and had a score of 124 for the efficacy and beliefs scale and taught Grade 5 in the suburban setting. One educator with 12+ years experience from the rural school community instructed her Grade 3 students weekly in moral lessons, yet felt uncertain about her ability to improve how she engaged students in their own moral development (total for efficacy and beliefs scale was 109). While there did not appear to be any significant links between setting, years teaching, or grade taught and educator sense of efficacy and beliefs the educators indicated confidence in their ability to influence students’ moral development. Almost half of the educators indicated uncertainty in how to use the curriculum to support discussions about moral issues, or advance understanding of the need for social conventions to maintain order.

### 3. Is there a difference in socio-moral reasoning (beliefs) of student participants based on learning conditions?

There were differences in the *beliefs* aspect of student socio-moral reasoning identified by grade. Gender did not reveal any notable differences in the tendency of students to subordinate or coordinate moral and social convention matters in complex situations. Specifically in the second vignette, differences in frequency/percentages of domains being subordinated or coordinated were observed between grades. Grade 3 students were the most likely group to prioritize a social convention, whereas Grade 8

students coordinated both the moral and social convention elements present in this vignette with greatest frequency. Grade 8 students used social conventions as the main rationale with the lowest frequency of all three grades. See Figure 5 for details of these differences in student beliefs by grade.

When students' responses were examined thematically, some responses identified either potential need of the person who dropped the money or indicated that it would be something they would want someone to do for them as the rationale for action. Other students' responses simply indicated it was the respectful or right thing to do. Looking at specific grades it was noted Grade 3 students would return the money because it was the nice thing to do and withholding the money could result in negative consequences. Grade 5 and 8 student responses were more focused on the need of the other person and what they would want someone to do if it were their money that was dropped.

In Vignette 2 some students identified a need to get help to resolve the conflict to avoid harm (either for themselves or others). Others also focused on the potential harm but their responses indicated greater self-reliance to solve the dilemma. A smaller group of students also refer to fairness in their responses, indicating an awareness of not only welfare but also justice. Grade 8 students were the only group to identify the futility of causing harm to another over a matter of convention (the rules of a game).

#### 4. Is there a difference in socio-moral *desires* (relational or instrumental motivation) of student participants based on learning conditions?

This question was approached in two parts, one involving quantitative findings and the other qualitative. The first part involved looking at the mean scores for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation and autonomy and influence scales for students, as reported on

the modified Child Development Project Questionnaire, and the second in examining the frequency of student vignette responses which prioritized relations over instrumental gain. Included in this descriptive analysis was a thematic exploration of student responses to the vignettes. A pattern between mean levels on autonomy and influence scales and the incidence of relational motivation was identified.

Using frequency data (represented as percentages) obtained from Vignettes 1 and 2, a lower percentage of Grade 8 participants were found to prioritize relations in their decision-making when compared with Grade 3 and 5 participants. Grade 8 students had the highest levels of autonomy and influence reported. Grade 3 participants were most likely to prioritize a relationship, based on a percentage of their population, and had the lowest levels of autonomy and influence reported. Responses of the Grade 5 and 8 students to Vignette 1 included a theme of reciprocity that was not present in the Grade 3 responses. Returning found money, might benefit them because someone might do the same for them one day. Grade 8 responses also indicated they would gain something immediately, to be viewed favourably by others.

Overall Grade 8 and female students had the highest incidence of combined relational and instrumental motivation in their responses, suggesting that they take into account how their decisions will impact themselves. These students had well-developed levels of autonomy; as well, they saw themselves as having influence in their classroom/school, and wanted to be viewed in a positive light. Together, autonomy and influence may impact the willingness of students to prioritize the needs of another over the potential risks (which they would be well aware of due to their social influence) for themselves. Grade 8 student responses indicated the largest difference between intrinsic

motivation, and extrinsic motivation. In contrast, Grade 3 students had the smallest difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to act prosocially.

In the correlational analyses, the Grade 5 participants were the only group to have a negative correlation between extrinsic motivation and social competence, possibly marking a point of transition in the motivation of students, shifting the balance in favour of intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation. Taken together with the intrinsic motivation level and the tendency to prioritize relations in complex social situations, findings indicated differences did exist based on grade (age) of participants.

5. Under what conditions are students likely to subordinate and or coordinate social and moral domains in complex social situations?

Student responses to Vignette 2, a complex scenario including moral and social convention elements and the potential for direct harm, indicated that social convention and moral domain elements were subordinated or coordinated differently according to grade. The findings indicated that the majority of Grade 3 participants focused on social conventions in Vignette 2 as their responses reflected the need to follow the rules or avoid consequences from authority figures. In contrast, the majority of Grade 8 students coordinated social convention and moral domains as their responses identified the futility of conflict that would possibly harm others to resolve a matter of convention, such as a rule-based game. Given that students in Grade 8 were more likely to coordinate the elements in this mixed domain scenario when compared to Grade 3 students a difference in student tendencies to prioritize or coordinate domains was confirmed.

6. Under what conditions do students report behaviour consistent with caring relationships?

Data from Vignette 2 alone were revisited. The frequency, percentage, and thematic analysis of student responses interpreted as relationally motivated, indicated differences for grade and gender variables. Specifically, when direct harm potential was implied in a complex social situation (incorporating both social convention and moral elements), Grade 8 participants prioritized relations in their decision making with the lowest frequency indicating to a greater extent conditions under which they would not become involved in the conflict, when compared to Grade 3 or Grade 5 participants. Grade 8 responses reflected a greater awareness of the potential risks/costs associated with prosocial action when compared to students in either Grade 3 or Grade 5. Finally, while female students might be expected to prioritize relations to a greater extent than males based on social expectations of females as caregivers, it was the male students who prioritized relations to a greater extent. Female students combined their motivation with instrumental gain rationale.

The nature of the relational motivation was varied across grades and by gender. For example, findings suggested that some students in Grade 3 were concerned with maintaining friendships so the game could continue, where Grade 5 students were concerned with avoiding a fight (or the conflict escalating), and Grade 8 students were focussed on taking control to end the conflict peacefully. A theme noted among female students' responses was a desire to intervene or get help to maintain peaceful conditions where the responses of male students indicated a desire to maintain the fun of the game, and demonstrated greater willingness to become physically involved if necessary. Therefore conditions under which students responded with caring relationships did appear to differ subtly in the nature of the relational motivation described.



7. What, if any, relation exists between socio-moral reasoning and reported behaviour of students across participating elementary schools relative to participant-described school culture and educational pedagogy implemented in participating classrooms?

To explore educational pedagogy, analysis of the interview material from three educators provided some insights into beliefs and specific practices employed within the classroom, with a number of recurring themes being identified. No educator from the suburban setting agreed to an interview, therefore this information is provided as general rather than specific detail about educator pedagogy, and will limit the conclusions that can be drawn in answering research question seven.

Among the noteworthy themes were *collaboration*, *autonomy* for students, *role modeling*, *community* building and developing *competency*. Collaboration was specifically described as part of each educator's practice to establish routines and expectations in the classroom. Two educators (Joan and Alice) indicated that because the rules are co-constructed students feel a sense of ownership and responsibility, promoting their sense of autonomy. By being given various roles to develop a sense of belonging, and having shared ownership for what happens in the classroom, a sense of community is formed. The goal is to develop student competency to manage their daily conflicts/problems independently, and to do so requires modeling, including at times direct teaching of these skills. However, within Joan's school/classroom students are formally rewarded for positive conduct. This was not the case in either Mary's or Alice's setting. These themes appear to align with innate psychological needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness, identified as necessary in self-determination theory, (Ryan

& Deci, 2000; Reeve 2012); are consistent with efficacious elements for student socio-moral development, a sense of belonging, feelings of competence, fairness, and autonomy, recommended by (Nucci & Katsarou, 2004) as cited in Nucci (2009); and align with characteristics identified in high performing schools (Doll, 2010).

### **Hypotheses Confirmation and Disconfirmation**

Within the field of character education it is generally understood and accepted that cognitive, emotional, and contextual elements are involved in developing socio-moral reasoning, an aspect of human character. Exactly how these aspects are intertwined may differ based on the approach to character education employed. For the purposes of this study, it was understood that character education as a means for developing socio-moral reasoning in students requires students to be able to think rationally about their choices, to respond to situations on both an emotional and cognitive level, and direct behaviour in ways that are consistent with both emotional and cognitive responses. At times, it is the emotional component that informs the development of thought, whereas other times, cognition informs emotions (Turiel, 2006). For the purposes of this investigation, beliefs (rationale for action) and desire (motivation for action) aspects of socio-moral reasoning have been the focus and are believed to be reflective of the recursive relationship between cognition (beliefs) and emotion (desire).

Educators in the province of Ontario are charged with the responsibility of delivering character education, and yet there is generally no professional development or learning opportunities offered either at preservice or in-service stages for educators to advance their understanding of moral development (Lickona, 1993; Milson, 2003; Nucci et al., 2005). Further, no “branded” program has been directed for use in the province of

Ontario. Without some form of evidence-based guidance to the contrary, educators tend to default to the behaviorist approach, rewarding and punishing students based on behaviour (Arthur, 2005). Extrinsic control strategies may also be the default for educators to gain student compliance with educator expectations when they have limited understanding of the importance of the relationships that characterize an ethic of care (Bondy et al., 2007). Given these facts, it was important to determine what educators understood about moral development and how this knowledge was employed in their practice to support the character development of students.

Earlier research by Walker (2008) suggests that educator practices interpreted with a parenting framework (Baumrind, 1991) are predictive of social and academic competence among students. For the purposes of the current investigation, the social aspect of moral development is the focus. For example, character education practices, intended to support moral development, that emphasize rules and consequences for breaking them as the basis for action may be expected to align more closely with authoritarian style pedagogy and limited knowledge or regard for moral development processes. Where an approach that emphasizes exercising critical thinking to highlight principles of justice, human welfare, and also reinforces caring relationships would be indicative of greater appreciation of moral development processes and might be more closely aligned with authoritative pedagogy.

It was hypothesized that most educators would rely on general pedagogical understandings to guide their character education practices intended to advance student socio-moral development because of underdeveloped knowledge of moral development theory (Arthur, 2005; Schuitema et al., 2008). Their pedagogy would be evident in their

classroom practices. This hypothesis cannot be statistically confirmed due to the low educator participant numbers. Some qualitative evidence does exist to support this hypothesis.

To begin to examine descriptively what educators understood of moral development theory, total scores for the educator participants obtained on the moral development scale were determined. The maximum score possible on the moral development scale was 14. The mean for this group of educators ( $N = 7$ ) was 8.86. In an earlier study, where a Pre-service Child Development Course syllabus was adjusted to incorporate character education material and social cognitive domain theory of moral development, the mean score for the control group ( $N = 25$ ) was 8.40 (Nucci, et al., 2005). The mean score from the 2005 study for those who received direct instruction on moral development theoretical knowledge and follow-up exposure to character education strategies, was 10.31, ( $N = 53$ ). In the present study, three of the seven participants obtained a score of 10 (considered high score group), while the other four participants ranged from 7 to 9 on this scale (considered low score group). Those participants who obtained a score of 10 ranged in years of experience from 0–3 to 12+ and came from two different settings, suburban and rural.

In the current investigation, specific details regarding social cognitive domain theory, a theory of moral development, were provided on the cover of the educator questionnaire to assist the educator participants in their understanding of the questions' content. Findings in relation to the earlier study cited above suggested that knowledge of moral development theory was not well established among these educators, and moreover that, as practicing educators, not much changed in this realm of understanding when

compared to the group of preservice educators from the earlier study by Nucci et al., (2005).

In fact two of the educators, during the interview phase of this study, commented that no one ever taught this in teacher's college, and that they weren't sure they were treating moral issues any different from social convention type issues because they didn't fully understand the differences. A third educator stated she believed she was using moral reasoning to address matters of convention. Indeed when educator responses to the interview questions and individual items from the UIC questionnaire were examined, a lack of clarity in understanding the differences between social conventions and moral principles was apparent. These statements of self-admission, the responses to specific items from the UIC questionnaire, along with the mean score findings, provided support for the hypothesis that as predicted educators would know little about moral development theory. This predication was based on earlier research (see Berkowitz & Bier, 2005; Lickona, 1993; Milson 2003; Nucci et al., 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007 for examples)

Next, educator sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education were examined using items from the sense of efficacy and beliefs scale and data from three educator interviews. From the sense of efficacy and beliefs scale, each of the seven educators indicated they believed they could positively influence a child's moral development (86% *agree*, 14% *strongly agree*), and could use everyday interactions to develop a sense of fairness and respect for others (57% *strongly agree* and 43% *agree*). Each educator indicated a belief that the creation of a trusting classroom was influential in this work. However, one educator (Mary), of 12+ years experience responded to Item 17 (Part B, UIC questionnaire) indicating she wasn't sure how to use regular curriculum

to generate moral discussions with her students. This same educator responded with uncertainty to Item 31 (Part B, UIC questionnaire), which asks about an ability to use classroom rules as a context for teaching about shared conventions and social norms. Despite delivering moral lessons weekly in her classroom, she was uncertain of her ability to improve ways to engage students in their own moral development. Despite these high levels of confidence generally, a minority of educators indicated confidence in how to create lessons consistent with moral or social convention issues, or how to identify moral and social convention domain matters in regular curriculum. Perhaps this difficulty was related more to educator knowledge of domain theory, than it was confidence in their ability to influence students' moral development within their classrooms.

Each of the three educators from their interviews identified the importance of instructing students in the differences between moral and social convention matters as a means of assisting in student socio-moral reasoning. How each educator went about this work differed in subtle ways, however, one constant was the notion that this learning did not occur within the explicit curriculum, but rather, through the 'hidden curriculum' or the daily incidental interactions among members of a school community. That is, the use of formal lessons may not have necessarily been the most effective method to help students develop their socio-moral reasoning. Each educator used practices intended to provide students opportunity to make decisions, develop competency, and have a sense of belonging. To do this, each educator relied on their own life experiences that formed part of their pedagogy in the classroom.

For example, Mary, who prior to teaching was involved in a program to develop student empathy (Roots of Empathy ©), felt she needed to establish positive caring relationships with and among her students. From her responses on the questionnaire, and in her interview, empathy figures prominently. For example, on Item 9 of Part A of the UIC questionnaire, Mary indicated the way to respond to a student who just hurt another is to highlight the fact that they hurt someone and ask how they might feel in such a situation.

Alice, who like Mary, had 12+ years in the classroom, distinguished between matters of convention and moral principles in response to items on her questionnaire. For example, when responding to a child who has caused harm to another, this was highlighted for the child, not a rule, and when students were being loud in the classroom, she referred to inside versus outside voices rather than highlight the impact of their choice on others. These are considered domain concordant responses. However, in her interview her references to social conventions were less related to rules to maintain order, and more related to the influences of a social group or society, which might interfere with what an individual believes is right (e.g., peer pressure). This reference may have been more related to the fact that she worked primarily with adolescents, suggesting that her current setting influenced how she viewed her work.

Educator overall scores on the sense of efficacy and beliefs scale indicated a range from 109 to 140. The maximum possible was 160 (based on the earlier study by Nucci et al., 2005). The mean score for participants ( $N = 7$ ) in this investigation was 124.14, compared to the earlier study by Nucci et al., (2005), which had a mean score of 118.76 for the control group ( $N = 25$ ) and 129.06 for the experimental group ( $N = 53$ ). The mean

score finding in the present study, in relation to the earlier study involving pre-service educators, suggests that years of experience (anything more than pre-service) may increase levels of confidence in abilities to develop the character of students through moral development instruction, although it would appear that no specific moral development theory is being employed. It is also worthy to note that within the current study, at least one educator, with the greatest number of years experience indicated uncertainty in her abilities to affect change in students' socio-moral development. In the absence of moral development theoretical knowledge to guide practice (Lickona, 1993; Milson, 2003; Nucci et al., 2005), it was hypothesized that educator pedagogy would be the guiding element in this work and that these approaches would differ. This hypothesis was supported based on the following findings: (a) educators' perceptions that they were not sure how best to assist students in their moral development (as it was not part of their teacher education program), and (b) the influence of previous experience or current school conditions evident in educator interview and questionnaire responses.

In the second phase of this investigation, the student participants became the focus. It was hypothesized that differences in socio-moral reasoning, measured as *belief* (rationale) and *desire* (motivation) of students, when examined by grade and gender, would be evident. That is, their ability to interpret accurately information from their environment and reconcile this information with their beliefs and feelings would differ (Chandler et al., 2000). This hypothesis was confirmed within this investigation.

As previously stated, for the purposes of this study, moral reasoning is considered the thinking process that drives moral judgment (Greene & Haidt, 2002) and incorporates to greater or lesser extents, emotions (Rest, 1984). Moral agency as an aspect of human



character (Berkowitz and Bier (2004) is activated when the desire to do what is moral is greater than other desires, and may result in reasoning and action being more consistently aligned (Bandura, 1986; Nucci, 2001). By deconstructing the reasoning (beliefs and desires) present in children facing complex social situations, the moral judgments made, including planned action, may be better understood.

Differences in beliefs were noted in student responses to the second vignette according to grade. Grade 8 students coordinated both the social and moral aspects with the greatest frequency, suggesting they were better able to process the complexities of a mixed domain situation. While some Grade 3 participants highlighted a moral principle (justice or human welfare) in their responses, their approach to the conflict showed a general preference for social conventions to govern their actions, following the rules of a game, or obeying authority. Of the 26 Grade 3 participants, 19 (73%) chose a rule or referred to social authority in their responses, compared to 3 of 18 (17%) Grade 8 students. Decisions made by students were perhaps influenced by their abilities to accurately interpret and understand the scenarios (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004). These findings provide support for the predicted possibility that differences in student judgments to subordinate and/or coordinate domains in mixed domain situations may be related to grade/developmental levels due to the complexity of the process and the increased ability of adolescents to “read” such situations (Horn, 2003; Larson, 2011).

Across the grades, students’ rationales varied somewhat between Vignette 1 and 2. For example Grade 3 students in Vignette 1 returned the money because it was nice, or because they feared punishment. The implication may have been that if they were caught stealing they would suffer consequences, or to steal from others may have jeopardized

relationships (it is not nice). While these students demonstrated “moral discipline” as Hunter (2000) refers to the ability to inhibit and direct desires within a larger moral order as an aspect of character, it may not be through “moral autonomy,” but rather through coercion or fear of consequences. Grade 5 and 8 students indicated they would return the money because they would want someone to do the same for them, and that the person who dropped it might need it. These responses suggested there could be something for them to benefit from in the future. They acted perhaps on the possibility that someone might one day do the same for them, which is evidence of direct reciprocity.

In the second vignette the youngest participants tended to focus on either the purpose of a game, to have fun, or to a lesser extent, the desire to avoid conflict. Among Grade 5 responses desire to avoid conflict was a clearly identified theme. This was interpreted as relational motivation given that being in conflict would not likely lead to positive relationships (friendships) with others. In fact the Grade 5 students’ responses increased in relational motivation from Vignette 1 to 2, the only grade to do so. Grade 8 participants, compared to either Grade 3 or Grade 5 participants, most frequently coordinated the mixing of domains and presented with combined motivation to a greater extent than either Grade 3 or 5 students. The responses of Grade 8 students indicated that by taking control of the situation to resolve things peacefully, they may be viewed positively by others, implying some personal gain (social status), as well, as relational motivation for their planned action.

Based on the work of Nucci and Turiel (2009), a possible explanation for these findings is that younger children tend to focus on the moral aspects of a situation (although this is not as clear a distinction in this particular situation) and older students

because they are more aware of contextual or social information can incorporate these elements also. Ironically, being more aware of these potentially non-moral elements and the costs associated with some choices (e.g., standing up for a friend) may make it more difficult for older students to process or accept the risks, resulting in more ambiguous thinking. Indeed the grade with the lowest relational motivation, and the highest combined motivation for the second vignette was the Grade 8 group.

Nucci and Turiel (2009) found a similar pattern when indirect harm was implied. Where indirect harm was implied (e.g., in keeping money that was found), the youngest (8-year-olds) and oldest participants (16-year-olds) were the most likely to claim that keeping the money was wrong, based on a moral rationale. The 10-year-old and particularly 13-year-old participants, in the earlier study were considerably more ambivalent in their reasoning. In the present study, the Grade 5 participants are closest in age to 10 years, and Grade 8 would be in the 13-year-old range. These students, like their Grade 3 counterparts, cited moral reasons to govern their actions, which would be to try to return the money because it is wrong to keep something that is not yours. Thematic analyses of responses to Vignette 1 revealed further details of value. The Grade 5 and 8 students' responses indicated concern that the person who lost their money might need it, and that they would want someone to do the same for them under similar circumstances, evidence of direct reciprocity and moral compassion (Gini et al., 2011) as well as a commitment to the ideals of community to which they feel they belong (Hunter, 2000). Where a few Grade 3 responses indicated fear of consequences for keeping the money, there were 4 Grade 8 responses that indicated there might be some conditions where they would keep the money. This finding appears consistent with the earlier study by Nucci

and Turiel (2009), as there does seem to be some variability in the reasons students gave for returning the money, even though most said this is what they would choose to do in this situation.

A significant difference was also noted on the intrinsic and extrinsic scale mean score between Grade 3 and Grade 8 participants. The Grade 3 classroom in the urban setting had the highest level of extrinsic motivation, which differed significantly from both Grade 8 classes (rural and suburban). Grade 3 students in general were as frequently motivated by intrinsic as extrinsic rewards, where Grade 8 students were more frequently motivated by intrinsic rewards. Intrinsic motivation is tied to feelings to competence and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000), such that students who feel they belong, are sufficiently challenged and can be successful demonstrate greater self-motivation and well-being provided they also have agency. Intrinsic motivation can be enhanced or diminished within the context of social environments (Ryan & Deci, 2000). While all students may have experienced challenge and felt they belonged, students in Grade 3, and particularly those from the urban classroom experienced less agency day to day, as measured with the autonomy scale on the student questionnaire.

Female and male students differ in their beliefs about why and how they might become involved in the conflict depicted in Vignette 2. Female students in their responses highlighted the moral principle of human welfare, their own and the welfare of their peers, and their described actions ranged from not getting involved to getting an adult to assist. Their responses indicated a desire to maintain peaceful conditions. Male students in contrast, indicated a belief that to fight over a game that was meant for fun was a waste of time, highlighting the conventions of an organized game more so that the human

welfare aspect in their responses. Male students also indicated a greater willingness to become involved directly when compared to their female counterparts. According to Noddings (2012) females have a predisposition to demonstrate altruism while males have a predisposition toward aggression. Both capacities can be cultivated through norms of socialization experienced by each gender. The ratio of intrinsic to extrinsic motivation was not significantly different for gender.

The identified differences from the social vignettes, along with the statistical findings for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation serve to illustrate the complexity of socio-moral reasoning aspects (Larson, 2011), specifically how moral reasoning of youth changes with developmental growth, the complexity of the situation, and whether direct or indirect harm is implied. These patterns may indicate students were attending to differing elements in complex situations, perhaps based on earlier experiences, and/or mark periods of transition from simple to more complex thought (Gershkoff & Thelen, 2004; Horn, 2003). These times are critical points in the learning process, where support and direction could make a tremendous difference in student learning and as such are worthy of further investigation (Larson, 2011). Through intentional (and unintentional) practices, educators can influence student thinking (Solomon et al., 2000), intrinsic motivation, feelings of competency, and autonomy (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Reeve, 2012) with the structures and practices they have in place. Within this context, the thinking and motivation relate to reasons to be prosocial.

Autonomy, competence, and relatedness, psychological needs identified in self-determination theory, when fulfilled support intrinsic or self-motivation development, and yield positive well-being outcomes (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and when hindered, impair

personal well-being and diminish self-motivation. Students must believe they have the skills to be successful with challenges they face, and feel they have choices in how they act rather than be externally regulated. Students must feel they will be supported with risks they take, and so a sense of relatedness also has bearing on intrinsic motivation development (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Developing intrinsic motivation, according to Subbotsky (1995), is the most promising means for advancing socio-moral reasoning and aligning action. From the current investigation, the supportiveness, sense of school community, social competence, and autonomy scales from the student questionnaire were positively related.

Taking together these descriptive findings in conjunction with the statistical findings for intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, there is support for the hypothesis that predicted differences in the socio-moral reasoning of students would exist. Differences identified are noted for grade and gender in the beliefs and desire aspects of socio-moral reasoning. Specifically, the urban Grade 3 classroom was found to have the highest extrinsic motivation level (statistically significantly different from both Grade 8 classrooms) and the lowest autonomy level of all participating classrooms. The classroom/school culture created by educators in these environments (Higgins-D'Alessandro & Sath, 1997; C. Power & Higgins-D'Alessandro, 2008) in concert with developmental skills (Nucci & Turiel, 2009), and perhaps greater societal expectations (Noddings, 2002) have influenced students to operate as a cohesive group and think more or less about relational goals (Noddings, 2012) to differing degrees.

Next, it was hypothesized that student use of caring relationships as their rationale for decision-making would differ in relation to learning conditions they experienced. It

was thought that classrooms/schools where students were encouraged and supported to care for one another might yield greater incidence of relational motivation than a setting where individualism and competition is given greater emphasis (Haidt, 2012, Noddings 2002). Such a classroom/school environment would be characterized by opportunities for students and educators to develop reciprocal relations, knowing one another well enough to also be able to identify and respond to needs not only from their own perspective but from the perspective of the cared-for (Noddings, 2010). Given that moral development occurs within relationships (Rabin & Smith, 2013), this was an important hypothesis.

Determining whether students acted with relations in mind required analyses of data from the first two vignettes. Differences in the priority given to relations were already identified above based on grade and gender and also appear to be supported quantitatively by a pattern noted in mean scores for the autonomy and influence scales. Perhaps not surprisingly, given developmental changes in self-regulation (Bandura, 1991), younger students indicated less developed autonomy than older students. The Grade 3 students had the lowest levels of autonomy and influence compared with Grade 8 students, who had the highest levels on these two scales, and, for the second vignette specifically, Grade 8 students appeared to have the highest combined motivation level and the lowest relational motivation levels when compared to Grade 3 or Grade 5 students.

The low level of relational motivation among Grade 8 students would seem counterintuitive, as the older students might be expected to be better equipped to consider the needs of others than their younger counterparts; however, it may be representative of the older students' awareness of the potential costs (social/personal/physical) associated

with some choices because of their level of influence and ability to make decisions that affect them personally. Given that in the work of Gini et al., (2011) it was identified that adolescents judged attempted harm more negatively than younger students one might expect the adolescents (Grade 8 students) to take greater action in this context. Perhaps, as theorists Giroux and McLaren (1991) suggest, the de-centering of power in the Grade 8 classrooms has given Grade 8 students autonomy and influence to make decisions without yet developing their capacity to consider critically the needs of others, or advance their moral compassion (Gini et al., 2011). Perhaps they do not think as a cohesive group, but rather as individualists, as the competition to be “at the top” is perhaps intensified during adolescent years in school.

With respect to gender a similar pattern between relational motivation from the vignettes and mean scores from the autonomy and influence scales is noted. Male student participants indicated relations were given priority with the greatest frequency across the first two vignettes when compared to female students, although female students had higher levels of combined motivation. Female students had the highest levels of autonomy and influence compared with male students. In this case, perhaps within the context of the school environment female students are given greater latitude in governing themselves and may be somewhat more involved in school activities (e.g., student council), exposing them to divergent points of view and assisting them in considering the needs of others and their own needs simultaneously.

Engaging in reciprocal relations, particularly where divergent points of view are present, enhances interpersonal skills and, in particular, critical thinking skills (Rubenstein & Feldman, 1993). Integral to the development of social knowledge formed



through long-term memories of social experiences (Crick & Dodge, 1994) are relationships formed among students and educators within the school context (McClellan, 1999), as students draw upon this knowledge in each situation they encounter. Educators who know and understand the value of care ethics view the educative experience, and particularly the relations formed through this experience, as key to socio-moral development of students (Rabin & Smith, 2013). Such educators employ practices to create a safe and caring learning environment where knowing their students and reinforcing the value of caring for others within this environment specifically are paramount and serve to make clear what is fair or just in everyday interactions.

According to Doll (2010) school climates where students feel supported, can have influence, and are able to self-regulate are characteristic of high performing schools and indicators of student well-being. Differences in student socio-moral reasoning were therefore further explored in relation to the described school culture and the educational pedagogy employed in participating classrooms. Overall students ( $N = 68$ ) reported a strong sense of school community, and a somewhat lower level of supportiveness on their questionnaire. More specifically, Grade 3 students ( $n = 26$ ) reported the highest levels of supportiveness and sense of school community when compared with their Grade 5 and Grade 8 peers. Each of the educators had indicated a school culture that was positive, warm, and supportive on their questionnaires. This distinction by grade may be related to the fact that students of this age look to adults for assistance in times of need to a greater extent than Grade 5 or Grade 8 age students (Nucci & Nucci, 1982) and therefore feel greater support as part of a community.

Educators who recognize the value of reciprocal relations in assisting with moral development create environments where students and educators come to know one another and can care for one another because they understand the needs of others (Rabin & Smith, 2013). Almost three quarters of the educators from this study identified the creation of a trusting classroom environment as influential in the moral orientation of students. Such an environment might be expected to embody elements of caring and being cared for, through the establishment of relationships. From the three educator interviews it was apparent that all three educators aimed to create classroom cultures and climates where students felt a sense of belonging as well as ownership for its maintenance. These practices would be expected to assist in the formation of reciprocal relations and may have additional benefits for the educators as well as students, including increased engagement and intrinsic motivation (Reeve & Tseng, 2011).

### **Discussion of Key Findings**

Socially competent children tend to favour relational rather than instrumental gains. That is, they value relationships and friendships to a greater extent than more aggressive, individualistic-minded children (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004; Nelson & Crick, 1999). Exploring the *desire* aspect of student socio-moral reasoning indicated a statistically significant effect for grade. The youngest students (Grade 3) did not distinguish notably between intrinsic and extrinsic rewards, whereas the eldest students (Grade 8) were the least motivated by extrinsic rewards. This finding indicates that grade (or student age) is of significance when considering the desire aspect of student socio-moral reasoning, specifically how they are motivated in their thinking, as this is likely to influence their judgment and subsequent plans for action. Further, the urban Grade 3 class

differed significantly from both Grade 8 classes and had the highest level of extrinsic motivation of all participating classrooms. The notable difference in levels of extrinsic motivation may also be indicative of the methods used to guide student behaviour at different grade levels and in different classrooms. This possibility is elaborated on further with educator interview data.

In addition, through multiple significant correlations identified in the current investigation, it would appear that a number of scales from the student questionnaire measuring *belief* and *desire* aspects of student socio-moral reasoning are related. A positive relationship between student feelings about their sense of school community and their feelings of supportiveness, social competence, their abilities to resolve conflict, and their intrinsic motivation levels could be considered indicators of positive school/classroom community culture and climate. School/classroom climates where students feel supported, valued, have influence, and are able to self-regulate are viewed by some as critical to student well-being and are often identified as characteristics of high-performing schools (Doll, 2010). Such environments convey regard for dignity and assist students in developing the self-regulation skills necessary for directing oneself in adulthood (Doll, 2010). Autonomy, relatedness, and competency have also been identified as foundational psychological needs that support intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and align with characteristics supportive of moral development (Bandura, 1986; Nucci, 2001).

Similarly, the significant negative correlation between extrinsic motivation and autonomy (control over decisions affecting self) as well as influence (ability to make decisions to influence classroom) is of note. Students who have a well-developed sense of

autonomy are not externally controlled and do not rely on extrinsic motivation to direct their decision-making. Grade 3 students in general, and the students in the urban Grade 3 class in particular, had the lowest levels of autonomy and influence as measured with their questionnaire. These student participants have possibly encountered fewer opportunities to make decisions for themselves (autonomy) with the support of parents and educators to feel they have a voice and some control in their lives (influence). Having success with these experiences serves to increase intrinsic motivation and enhances well-being (Ryan & Deci, 2000) diminishing extrinsic motivation levels. The nature of parenting style and educator pedagogy where intrinsic motivation is elevated may be characterized as authoritative in nature, reflecting high expectations in concert with support when needed, and caring interactions in general. Where students are supported, able to develop autonomy, and skills to be competent, intrinsic motivation will follow (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Dörnyei, 2001).

Further, a trend was identified for autonomy and influence scale levels (reported as mean scores) and the frequency and nature of relational motivation. For students in Grade 8, where autonomy and influence mean scores were the highest, the likelihood of a relationship being the sole motivation for their decision-making was the lowest. In fact there were some circumstances where students identified they would not become involved at all. Where students may perceive the stakes for themselves as the highest (socially, psychologically, and physically), their willingness to prioritize the needs of another is diminished. Dewey, might suggest a greater emphasis on understanding of self, the world around self, and the ability to think critically as necessary to enhance student responsibility as citizens. According to Damon (1990), the emotional capacity for

positive social conduct may be innate; however the degree to which it is activated may vary depending upon beliefs held and the influences present in the social context (Bandura, 1991). When personal identity incorporates positive moral beliefs, choices will be governed by desire to conduct oneself in alignment with these beliefs (Nisan, 1996). Pressures to be competitive or accepted by others may be particularly heightened during adolescence as they strive to be individuals in control of their lives and may interfere with their ability inhibit their own desires to think of others in these complex situations.

Analyses of student scale correlations measuring belief and desire aspects of socio-moral reasoning revealed some significant differences when sorted on gender and grade variables.

With respect to gender differences, the strength of the correlation between supportiveness and sense of school community, identified as significant for both males and females, is significantly stronger for female participants. This difference may be indicative of the sense of connectedness to family that is traditionally attributed to females as primary caregivers (Noddings, 2002). Supportive and caring relationships nurture feelings of connectedness and concern for the needs of others. It is within these relationships that moral development occurs (Rabin & Smith, 2013). Given that female students surpassed their male counterparts in the levels of autonomy and influence reported. It may be that female students are more involved in activities within the school and so feel more a part of what happens in this environment and have greater feelings of agency. Being exposed to divergent points of view through greater involvement may aid in advancing understanding principles of justice, maintaining relations, and promoting well-being (Noddings, 2002; Ryan, David, & Reynolds, 2004).

Female student participants responded in such a way that extrinsic motivation was negatively related to their feelings of influence. This was the only significant negative correlation identified when gender was explored separately and would suggest that, for females in particular, having a sense of influence and ability to self-regulate (autonomy) are key. For males, significant correlations were obtained for intrinsic motivation, with sense of school community and social competence. For female and male students, feelings of competence and a strong sense of school community are positively related to intrinsic motivation.

Grade revealed further significant differences. Only Grade 8 students had positive correlations for social competence with influence, sense of school community, and supportiveness. Grade 5 students had the only negative correlation of note, between social competence and extrinsic motivation. Each of these significant correlations may be indicative of a developmental difference. As students mature and become more independent in their thinking and more involved in the operations of school life, influence and social competence have a greater role to play, including an awareness of the risks associated with some choices. In fact the Grade 8 students had the highest level of influence compared to Grade 3 students who had the lowest level reported. Social influences facilitate moral development by providing support for specific expectations (Bandura, 1991). This is perhaps an even greater reason to ensure that students can identify as a group within the school community, where expectations include adherence to principles of justice and human welfare, and students are not compelled to compete as individuals to the detriment of others.

Student *beliefs* were investigated for tendencies to subordinate and/or coordinate moral and social convention issues in Vignette 2, using frequencies, percentages, and thematic analysis, and revealed differences. The responses of some students to Vignette 2 indicated a coordination of social convention and moral domain elements present in this complex situation. In other responses it was evident that the moral principle highlighted was human welfare rather than justice or any social convention. These students appear to use both rules to maintain order as well as the human welfare principle in their decision-making.

Social information processing models are concerned with how children code information to accurately interpret, judge, and then respond (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004). Where ambiguity about moral, and social convention elements exist stronger reasoning abilities are required and might be expected to align with developmental growth. Grade 8 students were most likely to coordinate both the social and moral aspects of the situation presented in Vignette 2, whereas Grade 3 participants showed a preference for using social conventions (rules and authority figures) to govern their actions, although some did identify a moral principle within the problem.

Research using social domain theory has shown young children are able to distinguish between social conventions and moral issues where direct harm is indicated (Smetana, 2006) however, judgments tend to be less clear when both moral and social convention issues are present at the same time possibly due to the processing demands required (Nucci, 2001). This investigation has obtained similar results. The results may be evidence of students being more or less reliant upon rules, external regulation tools, to govern their behaviour. Adolescents, at an age when rules may be called into question,

need alternative methods for determining their course of action, including the ability to decide what is just and does not cause harm, weighing the risks associated with these decisions carefully. They require practice taking on roles and perspectives of others to further develop their reasoning skills (Haidt, 2012) in combination with an increased sense of responsibility to the greater community as democratic citizens.

### **Student Vignette Response Analysis**

Student vignettes were intended to provide greater insight into the cognitive aspect of socio-moral reasoning (beliefs) as well as the emotional aspect (desire) present in student responses. Where a scenario is predominantly single domain in nature and the possibility of indirect harm is present, student responses were more consistent. This was the case in the first vignette where students were asked what they would do if they found money they knew belonged to someone at their school. No student responded to this scenario with a social convention to govern their belief about what they would do in such a situation, although a few Grade 3 students' responses indicated they would act to avoid a negative consequence for stealing. This scenario presented with the highest relational frequency overall for all students, indicating perhaps that students judge the right course of action under such circumstances with feeling rather than a rule. The Grade 5 and Grade 8 students' responses had themes of concern the person who lost the money would need it, for example. Earlier research by Arsenio, Gold, and Adams (2006) examined experiential factors influencing domain-related judgments and attributions. Specifically, when links between affect (feelings) and an event are established, they can also be used to predict patterns of behaviour (Greene & Haidt, 2002). Perhaps students identified with



the lost money scenario and were able to “put themselves in the shoes of another,” to make their judgment.

When the scenarios became more complex, the beliefs and desires indicated in student responses became less uniform. In such situations, significant processing abilities are warranted to adequately identify and weigh the presenting concerns (Nucci, 2001). The frequency of domain prioritization or coordination, where both social convention and moral elements were present in the second vignette, revealed differences based grade of student participants. Grade 8 students were most likely to coordinate both the social and moral elements presented in the second vignette, whereas Grade 3 participants showed a clear preference for a social convention to govern their actions. Where potential for direct harm exists, it appears students in Grade 8 are the most likely to operate from moral principles in combination with social convention understanding, weighing the risks associated with their decision-making. Differences in the abilities of students to “read” complex situations has been previously identified in adolescents (Horn, 2003) and is further supported with the bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), indicating the multitude of interactions between human beings and their surroundings serve to influence the individual and the environment through proximal processes.

Overall the incidence of relationships being given priority in decision-making was high for each gender across all three grades. While Grade 8 students were the least likely to prioritize a relationship in their decision-making, they were the most likely to combine their reasoning, assessing not only the potential for relations to be impacted but also the potential risk/gain to them personally. From the questionnaire data, Grade 8 students also

had the highest mean scores for autonomy (making decisions affecting themselves) and influence (making decisions that impact the classroom climate). Grade 3 students by contrast prioritized relationships to a greater extent and had the lowest scores for autonomy and influence on their questionnaires. Finally, female students showed a greater tendency to coordinate risk/gain for themselves with potential to impact relationships. Similar to the pattern noted for grade, female students surpassed their male counterparts in both autonomy and influence scale levels reported.

Autonomy, students having a well-developed ability to make decisions affecting themselves, was common to grade and gender variables. Where influence was also high, perceived risks associated with choices for the individual may deter some from making their decision from a purely relational stance, in other words, they are disinhibited from prioritizing the needs of others before their own goals or needs, a necessary aspect of character development according to Hunter (2000). This finding indicates perhaps an even greater need for students to experience caring relationships with their teachers and peers within the school environment, such that they come to understand and appreciate the needs of others and can respond adequately (Noddings, 2012; Rabin & Smith, 2013).

### **Educator Interview Content Analysis**

Interviews, intended to provide greater insight into the knowledge and practices of educators, were conducted with three educator participants, all female, one teaches Grade 3 in the rural setting (Mary), a second teaches Grade 3 in the urban setting (Joan) and the third teaches Grade 8 (Alice) in the rural setting. These educators ranged in years of experience, from 6–12+ years. Responses were examined and common themes identified. A summary graphic, Figure 17 from the previous chapter, is elaborated upon in the

following pages. Only themes of particular relevance to the stated hypotheses are discussed as they pertain to learning conditions created by educators.

To begin, when asked how educators established routines for their classroom at the start of each year, three themes were identified: *collaboration* (primary theme), *respect* (secondary theme), and *expectations* (tertiary theme). The emphasis on collaboration with students to establish the routines for the classroom, by these educators was suggestive of effort to encourage students to think more as a collective, “*we believe x is important in our classroom*” rather than as individuals, “*I believe x is important in my classroom.*” Students were actively engaged and valued in this process, sharing responsibility and ownership for their classroom, having influence. It is perhaps through this process that student feelings of belonging, supportiveness, and community might be positively influenced. Engaging students in discussion about why certain expectations may be necessary and how consequences are logically and meaningfully related to transgressions against these shared expectations helps to redistribute power in the classroom as a shared commodity (Nucci, 2009). According to Bandura (1991), the social context serves to influence conduct most effectively when transgressions against agreed upon standards are not easily excused, and responses of significant adults/peers within the environment are consistent with expectations and personal values.

The collaborative practice used in establishing expectations for the classroom could also be expected to assist students in framing their thinking beyond the classroom. Considering the needs of a group (others) rather than focusing solely on self helps form classroom/school climate (Higgins-D’Alessandro & Sath, 1997; C. Power & Higgins-D’Alessandro, 2008) where the needs of others are known and respected. Noddings

(2012) cites the value of group interdependence, such as that being developed in the classrooms of these educators, cultivating a commitment to the well-being of others, including a willingness to protect members of the group from harm. The notion of relationships being integral to well-being is supported by Seligman, (2011). Seligman goes further to argue that being part of a “social” group, where kindness, compassion, and self sacrifice are prominently reflected, will ensure greater success of the group because of the ability to cooperate and to understand the thinking and feeling of others. It was commented on by two of the educators that students corrected one another when rules were not adhered to within and beyond the classroom. The practices of these educators may assist in developing a sense of ownership and responsibility for school culture/climate among students, along with recognition that these expectations (or agreements) unite them as an interdependent group.

The leadership styles of an educator, like parenting styles, range from permissive to authoritarian and authoritative (Baumrind, 1991). An authoritarian pedagogy is characterized as high on demandingness and low on responsiveness. A permissive pedagogy is characterized as low on demandingness and high on responsiveness (Walker, 2008). According to Baker et al. (2009), authoritative classrooms are characterized by caring relationships, high expectations, and a warm and responsive structure. Together these elements help develop student autonomy and self-regulation skills and can be linked to positive outcomes in school satisfaction, academic competence, and classroom adjustment. The three educators overall, with their emphasis on *collaboration*, *respect*, and high *expectations*, created authoritative classroom cultures/climates. This is affirmed generally in the student evaluation of these environments based on their assessment of

autonomy, supportiveness, and sense of school community from these scales on their questionnaire.

When asked what each of the educators did when the rules or expectations were not adhered to, a theme was *maintaining student dignity*. Speaking privately to the offending students, reminding them of the expectations, and the impact of their current conduct on others was a practice shared by all three educators, again implying an authoritative pedagogy. The emphasis on the impact of their actions on others may serve to blur the identification of a matter as a social convention or a moral issue (for example, a social convention that students will complete the work assigned to them quietly during class time may become, “it is not fair to disturb the learning of others”, which could be considered a moral rationale). The objective of feedback aligned with domain transgressions should be to assist students in first considering the needs and point of view of others and also to reason beyond a level of direct reciprocity where specific deeds are anticipated to qualify for certain rewards or, in the case of conflict, where an “eye for an eye” thinking may be applied (Nucci, 2009). Applying an ethic of care requires that members of the school community (classroom) respond in such a way as to maintain caring relations and to take the offending student’s perspective into account (Rabin & Smith, 2013). In this, educators can increase the likelihood they are caring for, not simply about, their students and modeling this ethic for others.

It is worth noting that of the three educators, the one educator who used a more formal method for managing her classroom and meting out discipline was from the urban setting. This finding is consistent with earlier research conducted in two different fourth grade classrooms, one in a poverty-stricken urban area, the other, in an affluent suburban

area (Hayward, 1999). In this earlier study, Hayward (1999) found that educators in the urban area relied more heavily on authoritarian type methods, maintaining greater control to ensure safety for all, and that this practice was linked to the perception of educators that priorities extended beyond the academic agenda but were essentially out of their hands (i.e., poverty and crime). In the present study, the practices of the urban educator interviewed were still more authoritative than authoritarian, suggesting perhaps that she did not feel powerless to address the nonacademic agenda; her pedagogy was perhaps influenced by community factors and then balanced by her own values.

For example, while classroom rules/expectations were determined collaboratively, and students were encouraged to help one another (e.g., when someone was struggling with an answer to a question), there was a formal public “peg” system, with stages of consequence in place to admonish poor choices made by students, which was controlled by the teacher. “We use a decision board—a clothes peg/name system. When one warning is given the peg goes up, warning two is a loss of recess, warning three is a notice home to parent . . . but students know it is a fresh start every day,” stated the educator (Joan, June 2011).

When asked about their practices to help students feel that they belong and are cared for by others, educator responses indicated some differences in specific practices but were labeled with the general theme of *community*. For example, in each classroom the educators used group work opportunities. In one instance, students were taught specifically how to give and receive meaningful feedback for improvement, again suggesting a responsive classroom culture/climate indicative of authoritative pedagogy. According to Ryan and Deci (2000) communication/feedback or rewards that support

feelings of competence serve to enhance intrinsic motivation and are viewed positively for moral development purposes (Nucci, 2001). In Joan's urban classroom, these practices are once again somewhat more formalized, with a class game and a reward system (which was reinforced school-wide). "We play games where the point is not to win, but to be the most cohesive group . . . I reward others who go out of their way to help. I acknowledge others when they step up to be courageous (or honest) and say it is nice to have others looking out for us. The goal is to wean them off the Choice Chart prizes . . . gradually they have to do more to get the same reward" (Joan, June 2011).

Group identity is being formed in tasks such as the one described above. When students were rewarded with an extrinsic reward, the educator would use it as a teachable moment to share with the class why that student or students was/were deserving of recognition, not to motivate them initially. This approach may be seen as consistent with the pursuit of accomplishment for its own sake; satisfaction is in how the game was played. Seligman (2011) has identified this form of accomplishment as yet another key to well-being. The focus here was to develop an intrinsic desire in students to use the skills being targeted (the ones being rewarded) in novel situations they encounter. These extrinsic rewards serve to validate rather than shape student behaviour, an approach receiving some support in developing student socio-moral reasoning (Nucci, 2009) as well as integration of behaviour expectations (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Given that use of extrinsic rewards was a school-wide practice, it is not surprising perhaps, that the level of extrinsic motivation was highest among this class. Whether the extrinsic motivation was viewed as coercive or instrumental (enabling students to make some choice in whether they pursued the rewards for personal gain) (Ryan & Deci, 2000), cannot be confirmed.

Additionally, a theme of *safety for risk-taking* was apparent in educator responses. Students were invited to help one another out and to learn from one another's mistakes; as Joan put it, "Sometimes I ask the students a question, they may get stuck, so I give their peers an opportunity to help—this makes everyone feel supported, it's ok not to know the answer, we can help each other" (June 2011) and "If you want to say something there's a feeling that you will be supported" (Mary, June 2011). Before students will risk saying what they think they need to feel they are cared for and belong, that they are accepted for who they are. Creating safe learning environments serves to reinforce feelings of relatedness.

In terms of how educators view the establishment and maintenance of positive relationships, the primary theme was one of *role modeling*. As the adults, they must model what they expect to see from their students including *genuine concern for others*, another theme identified. As described by Alice, "I guess strategies that I would use to make sure that they are cared for [um] is to show my care and concern for students . . . showing compassion for certain things that happen . . . something happens within the family, to show care and concern. I think students follow my lead, and I also think that it is important to show the same compassion in front of other staff members because I know not always do staff members agree on how to treat a behavior that a student shows in a classroom, and I believe strongly that if I am showing how I would like to be treated, then that sort of—well my hope I guess is that staff members would follow my lead, because that's the kind of person that I am, and that's what I would look for, for someone to treat me, or how I would expect someone to treat me" (Alice, July 2011). In this response, it is apparent that the educator sees her role to model not only for the students, but also for



other educators in her school. Classrooms, and the educators within them, theoretically influence student character development simply through the observation and scrutiny students apply (Corrigan et al., 2007). Positive role-modelling is therefore of great potential value.

Each of the themes: *collaboration, respect, high expectations, community, safety for risk-taking*, and *genuine concern for others* serves to describe pedagogy formed by educators through individual experiences, and result in learning conditions created by these educators. These conditions are believed to have influenced the individuals within them, as social cognitive theory (Bandura 1991) would denote, and consequently the individuals within have served to influence the environment (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). These themes provide qualitative evidence to support the hypotheses that in the absence of moral development theoretical knowledge, educators rely on general pedagogy to guide their practice.

### **Explanation of Significant Findings**

A bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) and the systems relational metatheory (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008) are used to discuss the nature of reciprocal relations among students and educators, and their learning conditions. This is done in concert with domain theory and social information processing models. Based on the social cognitive theory, domain theory (Nucci & Turiel, 2009) and social information processing models (Crick & Dodge, 1994), the findings from the current investigation are not entirely predictable. While most results appear to confirm earlier research, there are some exceptions, and it should be noted that no causal relations were identified within, as this study was intended to be exploratory in nature.

Domain theory, a social cognitive theory, and social information processing both require students to accurately interpret the situations in which they find themselves and plan their responses accordingly. Domain theory was useful in helping differentiate between what is moral and what is not and being able to prioritize domains in complex situations (Nucci, 2001), whereas social information processing is the ability to process the complexities of a situation in real time in conjunction with past experiences (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004) and in alignment with current levels of desire/motivation. Further to these frameworks, a bio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998) and systems relational metatheory (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008) are useful in discussing the reciprocal relations between students, educators, and the school community at large to help explain differences.

First, educators may have chosen different classroom practices within their general pedagogical beliefs based on the conditions present in their environment. According to Bronfenbrenner and Evans (2000) energies in an environment are transferred to the people in that context and would be expected to influence thinking and subsequent choices. These choices serve to further influence the conditions in the environment. For example, Joan from the urban setting employed an extrinsic reward system. Whether she chose this practice because it was part of the school culture or because of a perceived need for greater control and structure to maintain safety cannot be confirmed. Given that she was in her first three years in the profession Joan may have been influenced by other experienced educators within the school setting, who saw these practices as effective. Educators using these strategies may do so unconsciously even,

and would benefit from greater understanding of not only how we can shape our reality but also how that reality shapes us (Neiman, 2008).

This need for greater control was identified by Hayward (1999) among educators in an urban area. This authoritarian type approach would likely result in learning conditions with fewer opportunities for students to develop autonomy, or have input in decision-making within the context of the classroom, and perhaps a greater use of extrinsic rewards to obtain compliance. The result of this may be increased dependence on adults to make decisions (Piaget, 1932/1965), reduced skill level in decision making, and/or increased levels of noncompliance, as students feel a lack of ownership in their learning environment. The class with the lowest level of autonomy in the current investigation was Joan's class and would seem to support the findings of Hayward.

Students at various developmental stages may perceive this authoritarian type control differently. The younger students may feel the need for adults to maintain control for their safety, expect adults to problem solve for them, and reward them accordingly, whereas adolescents may perceive the same environment as restrictive. Without meaningful opportunities to practice making decisions and having input, these skills are not likely to be successfully cultivated for positive outcomes. Further, students who are not able to identify with the expectations because they are not reflective of their personal values may struggle to integrate them into their daily experiences (Bandura, 1991). The resulting interactions between educators and students then serve to reinforce what each group perceives; students continue to feel controlled (as a need or a problem), and adults continue to feel the need to maintain control. The relations that result do not serve to enhance student socio-moral reasoning.

These patterns of interaction result in relationships among students and teachers being formed. It is within the context of relationships that levels of autonomy and interdependence are formed. These relationships, over the course of a student's experiences at school (and beyond), are integral to socio-moral development (McClellan, 1999; Rabin & Smith, 2013). Engaging in reciprocal relations, particularly where divergent points of view are present has been found to enhance interpersonal skills, including negotiation and critical thinking skills (Rubenstein & Feldman, 1993). Feelings of relatedness have also been linked to competency and intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000), characteristics necessary to moral development (Nucci, 2001).

Based on meta-analyses of over 800 studies in education, Hattie (2009) has identified the most powerful effects for student, teacher, school, and home influences on student achievement and well-being. School effects having the greatest influence are related to school climate and peer influences. The sense of self a child develops can be influenced by interactions within the context of a school's climate (Bandura, 1991; Hattie, 2009). Experiences can influence levels of self-confidence, noted to be powerful predictors of accomplishment, particularly in times of difficulty (Multon, Brown, & Lent, 1991) as cited in Hattie (2009). Related to confidence is motivation and students will have the greatest motivation when they feel they have support from others, suitable autonomy, and they are competent (Dörnyei 2001; Reeve 2012; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Supportiveness and sense of autonomy both were indicated as significant variables within the current study.

Findings from the current investigation indicated significant differences in the *desire* aspect of socio-moral reasoning abilities of students in Grade 3 compared with

those in Grade 8. Specifically, Grade 3 students were as likely to be motivated by extrinsic rewards as intrinsic, where Grade 8 students indicated a clear preference for intrinsic rewards. This is consistent with findings from Nucci (2009), whereby Grade 8 age students were found to be better able to consider the needs of others as well as their own needs when making decisions. For students in Grade 3, the understanding of fairness/reciprocity is not yet fully developed and may remain at the level of expecting specific rewards for one's choices or actions. Piaget (1932/1997) had suggested that younger children experience a shift from 'adult dictated' understandings of right and wrong (rules) to more equality-based decision-making by 10 years of age and, finally, equity-based decision-making by adolescence (Leman, Keller, Takezawa, & Gummerman, 2009).

Given that Grade 8 students are typically that much more developmentally mature, it is not surprising perhaps that they were able to judge the right course of action without the incentive of personal gain (reward). Larson (2011) clarifies that emotions, which may at times interfere with rationale thinking and goal attainment, are better understood and navigated by adolescents than their younger counterparts. The younger students (Grade 3) were found to have well-developed social competencies; however, their own self-interest may be interfering in their consistent application. In other words, they are less able to defer personal gratification than their older counterparts to do the right things for others in complex situations where multiple perspectives may need consideration. The ability to manage emotions within the context of real-world complexities and goal seeking can be cultivated in adolescence (Larson, 2011); the question perhaps is, how much can it be developed in younger students?

These significant differences in desire may be alternatively explained. Adults are less inclined to become involved in adolescent conflicts (either because students do not tend to seek out adult support or because the conflicts may go unnoticed by adults) and as such these students experience fewer extrinsic acknowledgements from adults. By the 7<sup>th</sup> grade, the incidence of overt aggression (e.g., physical altercations) is reduced; however, the incidence of psychological conflict (e.g., rumors, gossip, social exclusion) is increased. It is these types of transgressions that students will sometimes seek adult support with, but more usually leave them to peer processes for reconciliation (Nucci & Nucci, 1982).

When the situation to be judged is hostile (e.g., hitting another without provocation), preschool age children can state what is the “right” thing to do (Smetana, 1981, Smetana et al., 2012); however, when the situation becomes more complex, greater processing skill to prioritize needs is required such that social or psychological, not only physical, risks are present. This ability to identify and prioritize the needs in a complex situation was explored with the use of social vignettes and is discussed next.

Each of the vignettes depicted a situation that incorporated moral and/or social convention matters and resembled the types of questions used in social information processing studies (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004). They were combined with content specifically targeting social and moral domains (Nucci & Turiel, 2009). Note that in an effort to narrow the focus in the current investigation, the third domain, the personal domain, was not focused upon. The first vignette was the simplest of the three, with a single domain presented and indirect harm implied (this is unintended harm). The second vignette was more complex, with a mixing of social and moral domains and the presence

of direct harm potential (intended harm). The first two vignettes were identical for each of the grades in the present study. The final vignette was differentiated with age appropriate content, each containing a mixing of domains and the potential for direct harm once again (although the nature of the harm differed). For the purposes of comparative analyses, the first two vignettes were the focus. The third vignette was analyzed for descriptive not comparative purposes. Student responses to these vignettes provided some support for the earlier findings of Nucci and Turiel (2009), with some differences of note, and served to illustrate the complexity of socio-moral reasoning among elementary school age students.

In the second vignette there were clear differences in how the students of different grades (ages) interpreted and responded to the situation. For example, Grade 8 students were most likely to coordinate both the social and moral aspects of the situation and the least likely to use a social convention as a sole rationale for their action. This was not the case for Grade 3 participants who relied more heavily on the social convention aspect when stating their rationale for action.

These notable findings, if interpreted with a structural developmental lens, would appear to confirm age-related changes in socio-moral reasoning argued for by Kohlberg. If this were in fact the case, it would be expected that the Grade 3 students would always choose a social convention to govern their thinking. This was clearly not the case, as in the first vignette none of the students made this choice, and for the second vignette some Grade 3 students did choose moral reasons or attempted to coordinate the rationale for their decision-making. Instead, it is suggested that these findings be viewed as support for the work of Nucci and Turiel (2009) and their proposition that moral and conventional knowing each follow a developmental path in concert with experiences, and fully

understanding the application and coordination of thought for each of these domains in real-time situations is highly complex.

Differences within and across grades were noted in the processing of the social situation depicted in Vignette 2. For example, it was apparent that when some Grade 3 students made judgments focusing on moral elements they focused on what was fair/just, a claim made by Davidson, Turiel, and Black, (1983), where others focused on human welfare (Nucci & Turiel, 2009) and avoidance of harm as the filter. In one Grade 3 response to the second vignette (depicting a soccer game where an argument has escalated to pushing), moral reasons were cited for action: “ I would help them because no one would want to see someone getting hurt, so I would come in the argument,” the implication being, they are primarily concerned with the welfare of another and want to avoid harm for them. The convention at issue (whether a goal should be allowed) is suppressed completely, and there is no concern about the justice of the situation in this response. This is compared with a response of a Grade 8 student, “ I would jump in-between the person being pushed and the other person who pushed him and say that I am not sure if it was in or not (a goal) and you shouldn’t be pushing people around because for one, it is not polite to push someone and two fighting is not the answer to whether or not the goal was in.” The later response suggests a desire to prevent harm (by jumping in between) but also recognition of the futility of fighting to solve an issue with a convention of the game as well as the social inappropriateness of pushing others. Findings from the current investigation confirm a developmental difference in student tendencies to focus upon one or more domains in their decision-making.



As previously stated in this volume, Crick and Dodge (1994) assert social experiences lead to the development of long-term memories that form social knowledge. These structures become the bank from which children draw when they find themselves in different situations. Integral to the development of this social knowledge is the nature of the relationships formed among peers and between students and educators, within the school context (McClellan, 1999). Children process different cues in the moment based on their experiences, which then influence the mental representation of their options and the potential outcomes, all of which then become part of the child's general knowing and influence future behaviour. The responses of the students at each of the grade levels to the first two vignettes, illustrate this point nicely.

The results from this study confirm that the socio-moral reasoning abilities of students (their beliefs and desires) do differ in relation to their gender and grade and that educators do not have a solid understanding of moral development theory, and therefore by default, rely upon other knowledge, generally categorized as pedagogy, to guide them in their character education practices. The following section explores the educational implications of these findings.

### **Educational Implications: An Overview**

The findings from the present study may have educational implications in three realms: (a) professional development and learning for educators, (b) methods for the establishment of school and classroom cultures using developmentally suited strategies, and (c) peer and teacher relations as aspects of school climate. This section expands on these three areas using findings from the current investigation, social cognitive theory,

and a bio-ecological framework as a context for discussion of specific implications before making recommendations for further research in the final chapter.

Generally speaking, ministries and boards of education may need to work to develop an implementation plan to ensure educators have the necessary knowledge and skills to fulfill the task of developing the socio-moral aspect of student character. Students cannot benefit from strategies/interventions (learning conditions) they do not experience. Perhaps with greater awareness of moral development theory, specifically social cognitive domain theory, paired with knowledge of the developmental and even environmental differences in socio-moral reasoning of children, educators will be better able to align their practices to develop the socio-moral reasoning aspect of student character in purposeful ways. This knowledge may lead to more consistent positive school and classroom cultures, where students experience various role/perspective-taking opportunities to develop reasoning abilities.

While human reasoning will likely always have flaws, it is critical, particularly in secular society, that individuals think soundly about the issues encountered (Neiman, 2008). To do so requires abilities to view social situations from multiple viewpoints and may be assisted when recognition of moral issues can be separated from matters of social convention and suitably weighted. These skills can be cultivated in the context of public education where positive school climates are established from values that are viewed as just (Nucci, 2009) and support feelings of competency, autonomy and a sense of belonging. Where students and educators use common language to distinguish between matters of convention and morality, are able to coordinate/prioritize these elements, and integrate the importance of relationships when making judgments in complex situations

positive relations among peers and between students and educators might be expected. Each of these implications is further addressed in the following section, incorporating supporting literature where available.

### **What Should Be Known?**

Historically, efforts at school reform have focused on academic achievement of students, leaving all other aspects of student learning in the shadows. It is perhaps not a coincidence then that preservice education programs also tend to emphasize an academic agenda and minimize, if not exclude, instruction in socio-moral development (Milson, 2003; Nucci et al., 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007). The result, not entirely surprising, is that educators have little theoretical knowledge upon which to draw, to assist in the delivery of the socio-moral aspect of their practice; an aspect, according to Lickona (1993), that is far more complex than teaching reading or mathematics. According to LePage et al. (2005), a focus on cognitive development cannot and should not be separated from moral development or from the environment in which development occurs (Bandura, 1991; Damon, 2004; Noddings, 2006; Rabin & Smith, 2013).

The focus of some moral development literature is on identifying what educators know of moral development theory and their sense of efficacy or beliefs related to delivering character education (see Nucci et al., 2005; Temli, Sen & Akar, 2011). At the time of this investigation, there was no research located that related the knowledge and beliefs of educators to the socio-moral reasoning of students. Findings from this study contribute to the moral development through character education literature in three ways: (a) by highlighting differences in the socio-moral reasoning (*belief/desires*) of female and male students from different grades, (b) by providing examples of strategies employed by

educators to create learning conditions conducive to both academic and positive socio-moral development supported in other research literature, and (c) by highlighting the lack of preparedness felt by educators for the task of delivering character education to develop student socio-moral reasoning.

The findings from the current investigation confirmed descriptively an absence of theoretical knowledge among educator participants and a lack of preservice/in-service opportunities to develop this knowledge. Specifically, this sample of practicing educators, who ranged from 0–3 years to 12+ years experience, demonstrated knowledge of moral development theory consistent with the findings for a control group of preservice graduates from an earlier study conducted by Nucci et al., (2005).

A teacher's belief structures are based on his or her knowledge. These beliefs act as a filter for educational practices (Cochran-Smith & Fries, 2005) including the establishment and maintenance of a learning environment and, as such, have an influence on the socio-moral development of students. Viewed with a bio-ecological model for human development lens (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998), the interactions and reciprocal relations between human beings and their surroundings ultimately influence human development. Thus the quality of relationships children experience with one another, their parents, and educators, have the potential to influence greatly socio-moral development (Rabin & Smith, 2013).

Educator sense of efficacy and beliefs has been shown to be an accurate predictor of success in the classroom (Milson, 2003). In the current investigation, like others before (see Revell & Arthur, 2007; Temli et al., 2011 for examples) educators expressed uncertainty in knowing how to develop the character of their students on the University

of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) questionnaire. The mean score of participating educators was slightly lower than the mean score of preservice teachers (from the earlier study by Nucci et. al., 2005) who received direct instruction in moral development theory and character education strategies as part of their program. This finding was further supported with the anecdotal comments from the educator interviews. These educators claimed that they had never been “taught this” in their preservice programs or in the role and that they were unsure of how best to develop the character of their students. This finding, in concert with the findings of a previous study involving pre-service educators, (Nucci et al., 2005) suggest that preservice training and experience, each in isolation, are both insufficient to fully equip educators for the task. There are two related and noteworthy implications from the knowledge of theory, and sense of efficacy findings in the current investigation in concert with what is known about how educators’ pedagogy is formed and the influence of relationships on student development.

First, with respect to knowledge of theory, educators who remain unaware of the theoretical background to moral development will use other knowledge, their general pedagogical beliefs and values, to guide their practice as a default. Such knowledge and beliefs are developed through the experiences of each educator from child/parent and/or student/teacher relationships, for example, and will not be consistent from one educator to the next simply because of differing experiences. This means that outcomes for students, at least in part, become a game of chance, dependent upon the unique “skillset” of educators to employ strategies they deem appropriate to meet the needs of their students, as they perceive them. These strategies may be based on their own experience-

supported beliefs, or come from outside influences (e.g., other educators within the school) rather than research-supported theory and relevant valid data.

This reality has caught the attention of researchers and educators with respect to academic achievement, but it does not yet appear to be of concern regarding socio-moral development (Schuitema et al., 2008). Again, there is little research to indicate whether educators know what is necessary to create learning environments conducive to advancing socio-moral development of students (Revell & Arthur, 2007; Temli et al., 2011). As human beings, often we do not know what we do not know (so asking someone what they need in this regard may not yield fruitful answers). It may be necessary at times for those with greater expertise to initiate reflection on the part of educators so that they might identify a “need to know” and a desire to integrate refined understandings into their practice.

Educators are expected to develop the character of students in their care, and yet do not receive the support they need to perform these duties reliably and effectively (Revell & Arthur, 2007; Temli et al., 2011). Educators need first to understand that moral agency forms part of human character (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). Educators require initial moral development theory awareness training in their preservice program and ongoing research-based strategy training while practicing to ensure that their program strategies, particularly those used to establish and maintain the learning climate, particularly the relations within, are appropriate to their learners and align with research-supported theory to develop student socio-moral reasoning.

How educators are engaged in training is important. Based on the work of Joyce and Showers (2002), providing educators with theoretical knowledge, discussion, and

demonstration alone had no impact on educator practice in the classroom. Providing educators with theoretical knowledge, time to practice, and ongoing feedback from a coach, within the context of the classroom, improved the application of strategies in the classroom setting to 95% of educators making targeted adjustments to their practice.

Given that cognitive development cannot and should not be separated from socio-moral development, when educators prepare the learning environment they must consider both aspects of development simultaneously. In particular, educators must understand the importance of cultivating caring relations rather than relying upon extrinsic motivators, or external control, to gain compliance from students (Rabin & Smith, 2013). They must also appreciate that students feeling they have the necessary skills and the autonomy to make choices are key ingredients for intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and moral development (Nucci, 2001). Educators must engage in reflection on student learning to further refine practices and determine next steps (Hattie, 2009). This process is enhanced when educators can share their thinking and observations. How educators interpret what they observe in their students is crucial to how they proceed with further instruction (e.g., students who complete their work without complaint might be compliant but are not necessarily engaged and therefore may not be learning). It is therefore suggested that ongoing support for educators include moral development knowledge training, practice in classroom application (what does it look like), reflection (how do you know it is having a positive impact), and feedback (how can practices be further enhanced) using a collaborative or coaching model among educators within the context of public schools.

Finding that educators did not possess strong theoretical moral development knowledge upon which to base their program strategies, in conjunction with an expressed

uncertainty in their work to develop the socio-moral reasoning of students as an aspect of character development—regardless of years experience, should first be addressed at the preservice level of professional development. Pre-service programs could assist in the preparation of educators to create learning conditions conducive to positive socio-moral development by incorporating moral development theory and educational strategies, particularly those related to social cognitive domain theory, into their programs. Such a change to preservice programs would be welcomed by many student teachers who have a desire to improve their knowledge and skills pertaining to moral development (Revell & Arthur, 2007) and who have found the opportunities to do so inconsistent to say the least. This awareness should be deepened with specific knowledge pertaining to application of social cognitive domain theory in the classroom. The challenge to this will be when student teachers find themselves in classrooms where practicing educators (mentor teachers) do not share their understanding of moral development theory and practices. This again serves to reinforce the need for ongoing professional development and learning for practicing educators across systems (provincial/federal levels).

If the endeavour of developing student socio-moral reasoning as an aspect of character development is of real importance to warrant such time and commitment from educators, it would seem important that data be collected and utilized to monitor progress with identified and agreed-upon concepts, similar to the processes used to deliver literacy and numeracy curriculum. Determining the concepts and approach to be used has historically posed challenges in this regard (Revell & Arthur, 2007). Work by Corrigan et al. (2007) attempted to gather baseline data in rural schools where a particular model of character education was implemented to determine differences between experimental and



control settings with regard to student self-reported character, attitudes, and academic achievement. The current study has provided a snapshot of current conditions in 7 classrooms, a baseline if you will. To be able to determine whether any growth has been made through whatever intervention, formal or informal that is implemented, some form of measurement is warranted. These data would also be of value in identifying longitudinal changes in student socio-moral reasoning from one learning context to another.

Based on the current investigation, differences in student socio-moral reasoning were reflected in intrinsic/extrinsic and relational motivation levels and in correlated scales. Finding positive correlations among supportiveness, school community, autonomy, and social competence variables may be viewed as support for these variables to be measured and monitored. The concepts to be measured might therefore include intrinsic and relational motivation, perceptions of autonomy, supportiveness, social competence, and sense of school community. As cited in Nucci (2009), a sense of belonging, feelings of competence, fairness, and autonomy, are all necessary elements within the context of classroom/school culture for student socio-moral development to thrive (Nucci & Katsarou, 2004). Findings from the current investigation indicate a need to incorporate intrinsic and relational motivation into the concepts identified previously and could form the basis for data collection, assessment, and evaluation by educators.

Educators who know and understand the value of cultivating student autonomy, feelings of supportiveness, social competence, sense of school community, and intrinsic and relational motivation may make adjustments to their practices based on their observations of student socio-moral development without intending to do so. Conversely,

without this awareness, educators may choose strategies that do not encourage intrinsic and relational motivation or feelings of supportiveness, autonomy, and community among students, and therefore may be negatively impacting socio-moral development without intending to do so. Again, key to this data collection is the process of knowledge acquisition, practice, reflection, and refinement among educators. To focus on such concepts as a process for development rather than any particular doctrine or “program” may also be more accepted by the pluralistic communities that tend to form our public school systems in Ontario, Canada.

Educators, students, and parents alike must know against what standard learning is measured if they are to be able to determine when the target is met or what next steps might be necessary (Hattie, 2009). With accurate and meaningful data from which to plan instruction and adjust classroom practices that influence culture/climate, educators are better positioned to assist in the long-term socio-moral development of students. In other words, just as educators must determine the needs of their students in the realm of academic material before developing their instructional plans, so too is it necessary to understand in meaningful ways the socio-moral reasoning needs when establishing the conditions for student learning in the classroom/school.

Knowing students’ perceptions and level of need to enhance their sense of belonging, feelings of supportiveness, social competence, sense of fairness, and autonomy (Nucci, 2009) in addition to intrinsic (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and relational motivation (Arsenio & Lemerise, 2004), all relative to developmental growth, will help determine for educators areas requiring greater or lesser attention in their classrooms for groups and individual students. Having this level of insight into student reasoning may

also provide benefits when addressing transgressions in student conduct, as motives may be better understood and consequences can be developmentally better aligned with the misconduct for improved learning opportunities.

Educators themselves might be encouraged to reflect honestly and deeply about how they establish and maintain caring relations with and among students. According to Thayer-Bacon, Arnold, and Stoots (1998), most students asked have said they have experienced fewer than five educators who truly cared in the ethic of care sense. Benson (2006) found only 29% from a sample of 148, 189 students (from Grade 6-12) identified their school as a caring and encouraging environment, suggesting that despite what educators may believe they are doing to support students in this regard (in this study for example, all educator participants identified their school as a supportive and positive environment), students may have a different view of reality in their daily experience. This would imply that educators could be using ineffective strategies to create a positive climate in their school. The value in supporting educators with effective strategies for such work will extend well beyond academic gains and assist in socio-moral development (Rabin & Smith, 2013).

This study was concerned with exploring and identifying any relations between what educators know of moral development, their sense of efficacy and beliefs related to character education practices intended to develop the socio-moral reasoning skills of students, and the socio-moral reasoning skills of students. How educators use developmentally suited strategies to establish and maintain school/classroom cultures is important to the socio-moral development of students. The social cognitive variables, *moral reasoning* and *social information processing*, both have a part to play in how

students interpret and subsequently interact with their environment demonstrating their socio-moral reasoning skills.

In general terms, social cognitive theory is concerned with the interactions between individuals and their environment (Bandura, 1986). Specifically, this study explored the knowledge of moral development theory, the beliefs and sense of efficacy of educators delivering character education, the desires (motivation) of students and the beliefs (rationale) they hold to govern their judgments as they interact with others within their elementary public school environment. Students in this investigation were found to differ significantly in the desire aspect (motivation) of socio-moral reasoning. Specifically, students in Grade 3 were as likely to be motivated by intrinsic as extrinsic rewards, where Grade 8 students were more likely to be motivated by intrinsic rewards. Further, the students in the urban Grade 3 classroom had the highest level of extrinsic motivation and the lowest level of autonomy of all participating classrooms. Intrinsic motivation, according to Subbotsky (1995), is the link between moral reasoning and subsequent action. To develop this form of motivation is believed to be the most effective way to enhance the relations between reasoning and action (Subbotsky, 1995). Research by Ryan and Deci (2000) indicate that to advance intrinsic motivation, students must feel they have autonomy to make choices and competency to do so within the context of supportive relationships with others. Given this assertion, there are two implications worthy of discussion.

First, what motivates 8 or 9-year-old students, compared with 13 or 14-year-old students, will differ. These differences may be attributable to developmental stages; however it should not be assumed that students who begin with extrinsic motivation

naturally evolve to being motivated intrinsically, any more than it is reasonable to assume that young children operate at a preconventional stage and will advance to moral thinking in adulthood, as previously suggested by structural developmental theorists such as Kohlberg (1971). This investigation has shown some capacity for the youngest participants to be motivated intrinsically. Given that this capacity was evident in some, it is within the realm of possibility it could be further developed in others with intentional practices. Specifically, by using practices developmentally suited to learners that foster democratic social interaction (Subbotsky, 1995), which serve to cultivate a sense of autonomy (Nucci, 2009) and positive, caring relationships (Noddings, 2002; Seligman, 2011) among members of a cohesive group, students may develop both greater intrinsic and relational motivation tendencies.

Second, given extrinsic motivation was noted to be at the highest level in a Grade 3 class within the urban setting, where an extrinsic reward system was in place, it is possible that these structures in the urban setting actually fostered extrinsic motivation. A common approach in school environments is to attempt to motivate students (and in some cases, staff) with extrinsic rewards (e.g., free time, prizes, and awards, etc.). While this may be seen as a method for maintaining control in highly populated and often high-needs urban settings, it may actually be counterproductive to developing the intrinsic motivation aspect of student socio-moral reasoning, (Deci, 1995) particularly when students feel they are externally regulated without the ability to make choices for themselves (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Cannella (1986) has argued that rewards, including those in the form of verbal praise, can be viewed as controlling and actually suppress the development of autonomy

in students. This relationship was observed in the Grade 3 classroom where extrinsic motivation was highest and autonomy levels the lowest of all classrooms in the current study. Others claim that an overuse of rewards can undermine moral motivation for action (Deci, 1995). Nucci (2009) suggests that praise or rewards that serve to validate student choices can assist in developing socio-moral reasoning. In this way, students are self-regulating to some extent as they are making the choices to act in such ways that warrant praise or reward (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Educators who understand these suppositions may use extrinsic rewards sparingly as a means for validating student socio-moral reasoning that demonstrates understanding of principles of justice and human welfare as separate and unalterable from social conventions or personal preferences. Rather than controlling students' choices, highlight instead the impact of the choices that are made for self (feeling satisfaction in the choice) and others (treatment is fair and respects human welfare).

Focusing on intrinsic and relational motivation rather than extrinsic motivators may have additional benefits to student development. Students who develop strength in considering the needs and perspective of others may experience greater social support and friendships. Referring to the positive psychology movement, a sense of connectedness may protect against later psychopathologies and result in a greater sense of well-being (Seligman, 2011). For example, according to Gillham et al. (2011), increasing connections to other people and causes beyond the individual themselves may lead to a more positive outlook on life, and protect against depression during adolescence.

Such an approach may also increase student drive to persist with difficult tasks (Gillham et al., 2011; Henderlong & Lepper, 2002), not for a prize or praise from

another, but for the satisfaction they experience when they complete the task. A tangible prize may not always be available, but as human beings there is always the capacity to feel that sense of pride and accomplishment when a job is well done. When a sense of autonomy is cultivated in combination with appropriate opportunities to learn to consider the perspective, needs, and feelings of others as well as their own perspective, students are better equipped to interpret and suitably “weight” moral and social convention matters in complex situations. With this approach, extrinsic or instrumental motivation may be less prevalent, particularly in situations of conflict, and greater positive outcomes for students may be achieved.

Recent work on peace education by Noddings (2012) highlights evolutionary and psychological attributes associated with both war and peace and identifies some of the potential challenges in educating for peace in schools. Noddings argued that educating for peace should take into account some evolutionary understandings and focus more on moral identity. It is worth noting, for example, that tendencies to “protect” those who are genetically related have been identified and that altruistic behaviour, regardless of genetic relation, also exists. Altruism among females tends to be more prevalent, while among males there is a predisposition toward aggression, both of which can be, and often are, cultivated through norms of socialization (Noddings, 2012).

Correlational analyses did indicate statistically significant differences in male socio-moral reasoning beliefs compared with those of female participants. The positive correlation between sense of school community and supportiveness scales was significantly stronger for female students, suggesting perhaps that feelings of connectedness are more prevalent among the female participants. Given the tendencies to

stand up for those in a group with which a student identifies, educators would do well to increase the opportunities to develop meaningful relationships among adults and students, particularly among those whom they might not otherwise encounter, to nurture group identity.

The thematic analysis of student responses to the vignettes was found to differ subtly, in that female responses, more so than the male responses, highlighted a desire to be helpful or nice, and avoid feelings of guilt. The presence of relational motivation, or willingness to act out of concern for others, was also found to differ by grade. Such prosocial behaviour has been studied for its evolutionary value and its neurophysiological links in animals and humans (Carlo, 2006). While there may be a biological basis to altruistic behaviour, the influence of the environment cannot be excluded. The findings related to relational motivation imply that, the tendency to act out of concern for others is present in male and female students of different ages to varying degrees and may be cultivated within the context of school environments. To do this, Noddings might suggest, educators focus on the impact of choices, good and bad, to help students process events in history as well as daily interactions. This approach is consistent with the practice of at least one educator from the current investigation who indicated pointing out the impact of choices was part of her practice when dealing with conflict between students.

Further to the implications related to the desires (motivation) aspect of socio-moral reasoning, additional implications pertaining to beliefs (rationale) are also apparent. Grade 8 students showed a preference for coordinating the social and moral aspects of the complex situation presented in Vignette 2, where Grade 3 participants



showed a preference for the use of social conventions to govern their actions. Moral reasoning goes through periods of developmental transition (Nucci & Turiel, 2009). Specifically, increased capacity to interpret the elements in competing domains present in a situation sometimes means student ability to apply their skills to prioritize or coordinate domains is diminished temporarily. As students encounter an increasingly complex world (as adolescents), there is greater need to support them in developing the capacity to navigate the complex disorder of the real world (Larson, 2011). This requires peer and adult modeling, a supportive environment in which students have autonomy to be able to practice and develop competency.

Educators who understand that the ability of students to coordinate complex and competing elements in a situation is somewhat related to developmental age but also experiences can help cultivate these skills throughout the school age years. To do this, educators highlight the differences between moral and social convention (and personal) domains, provide opportunities for students to practice identifying the differences in their lived experiences and in academic curriculum, and use discipline that aligns with the nature of any transgressions (i.e., address a social transgression as breaking a rule, and moral transgression as not adhering to a moral principle). In this way, educators support student thinking without telling them what to think. For students to develop critical thinking skills rather than passive acceptance of external influences, they must understand the *why* and be given opportunity to make choices (Halstead, 2011).

Added to this, based on the importance of relationships in the socio-moral development of students, should be acknowledgement of the impact of those choices. The way children perceive the relationship between an event and an (emotional) outcome

relates to both socially competent behaviour and risk for psychopathology (Arsenio, et al., 2006). Psychopathology, such as depression, may be diminished by, increased levels of “other-directedness” as this in addition to temperance (i.e., self-regulation, perseverance) has been found to predict student well-being (Gillham et al., 2011) in adolescence. Conditions experienced by student participants were viewed as fair, influenced their feelings of support as part of a school community, as well as their sense of autonomy, and feelings of competency, variables related to socio-moral development (Nucci, 2009).

According to Nucci and Turiel (2009), younger children are more likely to focus on the moral elements (human welfare and causation of harm) and their implications in a situation, and are less likely to incorporate any social contextual information. In the present study, while younger students did tend to prioritize one domain over the other, it was the social convention domain that was given preference in their reasoning. Where moral reasons were cited in their vignette responses there was not a clear preference for justice or human welfare related reasoning. Adolescents were better able to coordinate the mixing of the social and moral domains in the second vignette, identifying the moral principles of justice and harm, as well as the social conventions of a rule based game.

Judgments are contextualized (Nucci, 2009) meaning individuals of similar social development may interpret moral, social convention, or personal aspects differently. The school culture and climate, including interpersonal relations within this context, may have contributed to the experiences students drew upon and served to contextualize their perception of situations presented in the vignettes. For this reason, educators must be aware of the impact that school culture and the lived experiences of the climate in a

school have on the abilities of students to reason, interpret, and respond in complex situations. Processes used should therefore emphasize principles of human welfare and justice, where that is called for, and highlight the need for social conventions where that is relevant, to cultivate these understandings without enforcing student compliance as a moral imperative (Halstead, 2011) or using coercive techniques (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

Returning to an earlier definition of school culture and climate from this study, culture refers to the underlying values and ideology (Anderson, 1982; Creemers & Reezigt, 1999) and climate, the practices and lived experiences of these values (Creemers & Reezigt, 1999). Taken together they form the basis for a learning environment. A classroom and/or school culture that supports student competency through autonomous decision making, that values moral principles of justice and human welfare within the context of meaningful relationships, and consistently uses discipline that is developmentally suited and aligned with the nature of any transgression has the potential to positively develop student socio-moral reasoning.

Differences noted between grades with respect to student ability to prioritize and or coordinate different domains in complex situations may be suggestive of exposure to differing conditions within the school environment as well as developmental levels (e.g., how much autonomy or related feelings of competency are developed in a Grade 3 class compared to a Grade 8 class). Specifically, educators in these contexts may be using different strategies to establish and maintain relations between themselves and students as well as relations among peers as part of the school/classroom culture. How conflict was addressed, how students were involved in decision making and problem solving, and the motivators (intrinsic or extrinsic) employed all contributed to the classroom climate. For

example, whether educators mediated conflict and supported students to find their own solutions or provided the solution, whether students were given opportunities to work with peers they might not otherwise get to know (e.g., through peer mentor relationships and teacher assigned groupings) or if students were always grouped in the same ways (e.g., by ability within a classroom), and whether students were motivated with rewards (e.g., awards, prizes) or supported through recognition of their efforts, impact relationships and, by extension, classroom/school climate.

All educator participants indicated their respective school culture/climate was positive, warm, and supportive. Differences among student participants were noted as to how they felt their class/school supported them to feel competent, gave them a sense of belonging, and afforded them autonomy. Further, the correlated scales when sorted by grade also differed, suggesting there were differences in the operationalization of the “positive, warm, and supportive” school culture among the three grades represented.

How classrooms and schools are structured, the rules that govern them, the priorities that are established, and the way individuals interact with one another all serve to influence student socio-moral reasoning (Nucci, 2009). The operational strategies employed in each of the participating classrooms (e.g., the opportunities for student input into decision making, the ways conflict was managed *with* rather than *for* students) within the different classrooms were reflective of the pedagogical beliefs held by these individual educators. As part of the overall social experience of students, such strategies served to influence the way students interpret complex social situations, including the priorities they placed on different elements, which then influenced their judgment, and ultimately, their course of action.

### **Who Needs to Know and Benefit from This Study?**

The findings related to educator knowledge of moral development and sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education are of value to postsecondary institutions, as well as boards and ministries of education. Specifically, it must be known that educators require support in developing their knowledge of moral development theory, and this knowledge needs to be supported with strategies for development of student socio-moral reasoning as part of their character development. The process for this support should align with the approach taken with academic program delivery trends, taking into account the need for educators to receive the information, see it in action, practice it, reflect, and receive feedback as an ongoing form of professional development and learning for real and lasting change to be made in the operationalization of schools.

Whole school reform has not yielded the success hoped for, perhaps because socio-moral development has not kept pace with the priority given to cognitive development. Instead, character development tends to oversimplify “the process of moral development by reducing it to the habituation of children and young people into acting in accordance with a pre-packaged set of moral values” (Halstead, 2011, p. 340). The preparation of teachers for delivering high-quality academic programs should be no more important than the preparation and support educators receive to help develop the socio-moral reasoning aspect of their students’ character. To develop strength of character may have lifelong lasting implications in the reduction of psychopathologies and well-being for students (Gillham et al., 2011), making it of significant value for investment. Neiman (2008) would suggest with respect to moral reasoning that we must accept ideas as

possibilities and not absolute truths (prepackaged rules), if we are ever to improve current conditions, a reasonable assertion given the nature of a pluralistic society.

The findings pertaining to relations and/or differences in student socio-moral reasoning (beliefs and desires) based on gender and grade should be of interest and value to practicing educators seeking to create developmentally suited learning environments for their students. Specifically, understanding that learning conditions which support development of competency through student autonomy combined with opportunities to learn to consider the needs and feelings of others as well as their own perspective serve to enhance feelings of belonging. Competency, autonomy, and relatedness are believed to foster intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000) and when paired with domain concordant teaching, will likely assist in preparing students to interpret, and suitably “weight” moral and social convention matters in complex situations for the satisfaction inherent to the act, not for any other reason. Educators from primary through to secondary schooling must understand socio-moral development as the complex and important process that it is and not as an appendage to the cognitive development of students that can be covered through their habituation to rules and expectations.

Within the domain of social conventions it is important that all educators understand there is variability in the weighting given to different conventions by students, and this weighting changes with student maturation. This may be of greatest relevance in elementary schools where student age/development spans the greatest number of years (typically 4 years through to 14 years of age). Thornberg (2010) identified that students judged conventions intended to provide structure (and therefore an element of safety), as more serious than those that governed etiquette. To break a “structural-type” convention

may have implications for safety (e.g., children not lining up to enter their school may lead to crowding and accidental harm). Younger students look to the adults to assist with maintaining their safety (Nucci, 2009) as an extension of the parent–child relationship, and so younger students often seek out an educator on site to resolve such a conflict.

To assist in developing autonomy and build relationships, educators can use transgressions as an opportunity to model problem solving skills, including active listening and interest based negotiation. This instruction may help advance student competency in identifying and reconciling conflicting domains. They could use these opportunities to highlight the need to hear all viewpoints, (Noddings, 2012) recognize moral issues and understand the purpose served by conventions present in the situation, rather than simply providing a solution for the child. According to Nucci (2009), it is necessary to help children identify the emotions and motivators of others and to provide alternative viewpoints, including understanding the purpose of the rule, to discourage “an eye for an eye” attitudes or a belief that it is through the application of power that one achieves what one desires. The ability to cooperate is supported through understanding the viewpoints of others when there is a sense of belonging to a group where compassion, kindness and self-sacrifice are modeled (Seligman, 2011)

As students mature and progress through the junior and intermediate years of elementary school, their perception of the need for some conventions may shift, or even collide with areas viewed as their “personal domain” (e.g., a school dress code to maintain a standard for all in the learning environment may conflict with an adolescent’s desire to express his or her personal preferences). At this time students are also consolidating their sense of justice and extending their abilities to manage increasingly

complex situations while taking into account the perspectives/needs of others. Students at this stage are developing their sense of self and have a growing need for autonomy, so it is perhaps especially important at this time to engage students in meaningful opportunities to have voice and choice in their schools. This may be accomplished with student participation on school committees where their voice and perspectives can be taken into account to help shape their school community, increase a sense of belonging and sense of autonomy, and have the benefit of enhancing peer and educator–student relations through a greater sense of connectedness.

Yet another benefit of hearing student voice is engagement, when educators help match motivation with the challenges that students encounter. Identifying genuine interests of students, as a means of engaging students, was long ago identified as essential to the educative experience by Dewey. This practice taps into the intrinsic motivation of students and requires they have sufficient agency to execute choice. Larson (2011) clarifies that educators cannot force motivation on students but rather must support students to be able to identify and form a connection with the challenges they face.

In Ontario, the Ministry of Education has begun to recognize the importance of student voice between grades 7 and 12 and recently introduced a series of grants, schools (elementary and secondary) can apply for to encourage projects that engage students. This focus is the result of students expressing a desire to (a) share their thinking about how to enhance student engagement in public schools, (b) create school cultures where all students have a sense of belonging, and (c) be able to make decisions that shape their schools and the lives of students within them.<sup>2</sup> The rationale given for the Ministry of

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<sup>2</sup> (See <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/students/speakup/index.html> for further details)



Education to engage students in this way aligns with the identified areas of difference (autonomy, supportiveness, and sense of school community scale levels) among student participants within the current investigation, and are also congruent with Fredricks et al., (2004) who describes a tri-dimensional relationship between behavioural, cognitive, and emotional engagement. Examples of behavioural engagement include participation in school activities, and contributing to the operation of the classroom. Cognitive engagement refers to the metacognitive processes of planning, reflecting, and evaluating thinking, as well as self-regulation practices, and emotional engagement describes students' sense of connectedness and feelings of belonging, based on the relationships among students and with adults within the school setting.

Educator effectiveness from the perspective of early adolescents is related to the ability of the educator to address transgressions in domain concordant ways (Nucci, 1984). To be considered knowledgeable and effective from the perspective of early adolescents especially, educators must address moral transgressions using principles of human welfare, justice, and fairness and must address social convention transgressions with rules suitable to govern operations. Where domain concordant classroom management strategies are in place, students share a positive trusting relationship with their teachers and among peers (Nucci, 1984), perhaps in part because it is understood what is expected from all members and why, and these expectations are reinforced through shared ownership for their application. Such a learning environment is safe, predictable, just, and reflective of authoritative leadership. To intentionally create such an environment at any stage of formal education educators would do well to understand the differences between the social convention and moral domains.

Many previous attempts at whole school reform for character education have focused on “fixing” students, and have not had the desired impact of diminishing perceived elevated levels of antisocial behaviour (White & Warfa, 2011), in part because they are reactive and punitive in nature. Perhaps because they also tend to employ externally regulated strategies (e.g., rewards and punishments are awarded by adults in control) students fail to experience the locus of control required for agency or competency and intrinsic motivation is negatively impacted (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Damon (2004) argues the opposite is needed. Students must be viewed from a positive stance as resources and not as deficits in society.

Additionally, these school reform efforts have focused on behaviours rather than developing socio-moral capacities as an aspect of cognitive development. The findings from this study and the recent direction taken by the Ontario Ministry of Education to strengthen opportunities and expectations for students to express their thinking in meaningful and influential ways to shape their school communities are positive signs that the tides may be turning. However, this approach marks a tremendous shift in education, which has traditionally attempted to ameliorate damage associated with problems such as learning disabilities, poor self-esteem, exposure to violence, and aggressive tendencies through early identification and intervention (Damon, 2004). It will take time and thoughtful effort to adjust to a new way of thinking and being in publicly funded schools.

Where students were perceived as needing “fixing”, the job of educators was to direct students in virtually all aspects of school life, suggesting they knew the right and best course of action and students simply needed to know the rules and follow them to make improvements. While there is little question there are adversities that youth will

encounter, these do not consume educators who see children from a positive developmental perspective. Such educators endeavour to engage students by seeking to understand what interests them, using activities that are meaningful, productive and challenging, tapping into their intrinsic motivation to learn, and providing students with opportunities to develop a sense of autonomy (Damon, 2004) within the context of supportive relationships. According to Ryan and Deci (2013), educators who consider students' interests, minimize coercive techniques, evaluative pressure/control and maximize choice/engagement are considered autonomy-supportive educators.

### **What Do We Need to Know for Future Direction/Research?**

This research was intended to provide a glimpse into the current conditions in public elementary schools with respect to the knowledge of moral development theory held by educators, the relation between their knowledge of moral development and their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education, and the socio-moral reasoning of students in their care. In each of the participating classrooms, no formal or branded program was in place to deliver character education. Instead character education was delivered in the form of daily interpersonal interactions, the foundation of social life in schools. From this research two areas were identified for future research and would potentially have positive implications when applied to educator practice. The first pertains to methods for accurate assessment of student socio-moral strengths/needs, and the second relates to research specifically in the area of relational motivation, how to increase it, and why some students engage in it more than others.

A sense of efficacy and beliefs are key in determining the success of educators in their practice (Milson, 2003). It is necessary to provide educators with the tools (ongoing

professional learning opportunities to develop knowledge) to create learning environments that embrace: (a) democratic social interactions based on developmental understanding of fairness/justice and well-being (Nucci, 2009; Seligman 2011), (b) a cultivation of student autonomy and competence (Nucci, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000), and (c) positive and caring relationships with others in their classrooms and across school communities through the development of a sense of belonging and supportiveness (Noddings, 2012; Nucci, 2009; Ryan & Deci, 2000). Such environments would be expected to be places where intrinsic and relational motivation would flourish and are achieved through authoritative leadership. Strategies consistent with the identified characteristics for learning environments begin with a view of students as active participants in the learning process and may include: using collaborative problem solving, providing opportunity for students to work with various groupings of students, teaching, modeling, and reinforcing problem solving strategies that encourage active listening and identification of shared interests, providing constructive feedback, and engaging students through their interests.

First, having a means for measuring the current perceptions and needs of students in areas of autonomy, competence, sense of belonging and supportiveness, as well as levels of intrinsic/extrinsic, and relational motivation combined with understanding of principles of justice and welfare may assist educators in determining specific areas requiring additional attention for any given student or group of students. Development and testing of such an instrument or methodological approach (e.g., targeted observation skills) may prove useful to educators in the field if found to be a reliable and valid measure of student socio-moral reasoning needs, and it is easily administered and

interpreted. Assessment and tracking of developmental changes in student socio-moral reasoning over time may also have benefits in furthering the discourse on this highly complex phenomenon and assist educators in flagging any areas of concern (e.g., predictors of psychopathologies).

Second, recognizing that the capacity to be motivated intrinsically is directly related to socio-moral reasoning and subsequent action (Subbotsky, 1995), methods for enhancing this form of motivation specific to developmental needs of students and in the context of school environments, requires further exploration. Recent research in the field of student engagement may hold some promise in this regard (see Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012 for example). While motivation is a broadly researched field, for these purposes it would be necessary to examine when and why students in general choose to prioritize a relationship (or potential relationship) with another over personal/instrumental gain. What experiences and understandings specifically are students using in their decision-making, and what attributions are they ascribing to others? To isolate such reasoning may assist researchers and educators in being proactive in developing conditions where caring relationships can flourish and are more likely to be prioritized within the context of publicly funded diverse school systems.

Rather than beginning with the mindset of repairing students, which has been the past practice in education, educators need to begin with knowledge of the assets that all students bring to the table. Noddings (2012) has argued human beings are predisposed to certain ways of being, including altruistic and aggressive tendencies, given the right circumstances. Others have identified the social emotion of empathy as a natural asset upon which prosocial development can be built (Damon, 2004; De Waal, 2009).

Educators would do well to acknowledge that human beings have these tendencies. They must know under what circumstances they are activated and what can be done to cultivate them for more positive outcomes, starting with recognition of the role of socio-moral reasoning in all interpersonal relations.

Within the context of learning conditions created with educators and students working together, there must be opportunity for students to develop a sense of belonging through experiencing supportiveness, competence, and a sense of autonomy. Cultivating positive relationships with various members of a community increases the number of people students identify with as “part of their group” and would also be expected to increase the incidence of altruistic type conduct and reduce the incidence of aggression within the group. Ryan and Deci (2000) argue that students given agency to make choices will feel more competent when provided with supportive relationships where encouraging feedback is clearly communicated. Another benefit identified is the increase in intrinsic motivation when these characteristics are present. Intrinsic motivation also serves to increase engagement levels, which according to Covell, McNeil, and Howe (2009) serve to benefit the educator as well as the students. They found educators who created such environments were more satisfied in their work and less likely to burn out.

Creating such an environment would provide ample opportunities for positive proximal process to occur, allowing for energies to be transferred between individuals and their environment, which serves to influence over the long term, human development (Bronfenbrenner & Evans, 2000) and the environment. From these dynamic interactions, students cultivate their abilities to process social information, and with direct attention given to social and moral domain content, students are better equipped to process more

complex experiences involving principles of human welfare, justice and recognition of the need for social convention to maintain order. Practice with identifying and prioritizing or coordinating mixed domain situations goes to support student competency and feelings of autonomy.

Finally, student capacity to negotiate the complexities of competing domains will fluctuate as a function of their understanding of moral issues and the purpose of social conventions. Educators first need understanding of this and, second, need to apply this knowledge in their classroom practice in how rules, relationships, and conflict are managed. Not separating socio-moral development from cognitive development and thereby raising its profile in profession preparation, and ongoing learning for educators is imperative to this end.

### **Summary**

In summary, the educational implications identified in the current investigation fall into three areas: (a) professional development and learning for educators, (b) methods for the establishment of school and classroom cultures using developmentally suited strategies, and (c) peer and student–teacher relations as aspects of school climate.

Educators in the current investigation have confirmed descriptively through survey and interview data that educator knowledge of moral development is not well formed and that educator sense of efficacy in developing the character of their students is not consistent. To address this area of need, faculties of education, ministries of education, and boards of education need to provide educators with the tools (professional learning opportunities to develop knowledge) to enhance their understanding as well as their beliefs and sense of efficacy in their field.

When it comes to establishing school/classroom culture, it is necessary for educators to understand that learning conditions which provide opportunities for students to learn to consider the needs and feelings of others as well as their own perspective, and that foster intrinsic motivation, through engagement will be important to creating learning spaces where students feel they belong, can be successful, and have agency. Educators need to know the extent to which student socio-moral development may be influenced by the quality of interactions within the context of the lived experience of the school environment, and feel they can make a positive difference in this regard. Without greater understanding on the part of educators of how student socio-moral development is affected by experiences attempts at character education will be one dimensional and superficial in nature at best. Our youth need more than rules to direct and rewards and punishments to motivate. They must be encouraged to reflect critically, to question, and to see in action those who strive for a better reality than what currently exists. The resulting relations within the student population and between students and teachers will serve to reinforce priorities for students and clarify how they perceive the world around them so that they might make more informed and reasonable decisions when facing the realities of complex social situations.

The following final chapter discusses the limitations of the current investigation, including those related to the measures and the methodology employed, before making final concluding remarks.



## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS**

This chapter concludes the current study with an overview of limitations identified with the measures as well as the methodology. Future directions and final concluding remarks round out this final chapter.

### **Limitations of Measures**

The current investigation employed two quantitative data measures in the form of questionnaires for both educators and student participants. Due to the low numbers of educator participants, their questionnaire data were not considered quantitatively. Educator questionnaire data were viewed qualitatively along with material obtained through the three educator interviews and the student vignette data. The two survey measures employed, the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Questionnaire and the Child Development Questionnaire, each were used in previous studies and were not designed specifically for the current investigation. These instruments were selected because they were already measures with tests of reliability and validity and were believed to align satisfactorily with the purpose of the current investigation. The quantitative nature of these measures was also anticipated to assist in controlling somewhat for inevitable researcher subjectivity (Peshkin, 1988). Peshkin (1993) has categorized the outcomes of qualitative research as description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation.

The qualitative data collection in the present study was intended to serve four purposes, first, to provide description of educator practices, second, to elaborate and clarify educator beliefs and sense of efficacy related to character education, to provide information about student beliefs and desires (specifically the nature of judgments made

where moral and social convention elements are present in complex social situations and the motivation used in making these judgments), and finally, to verify quantitative data.

At the conclusion of this study, when the data were being interpreted, the researcher identified that perhaps the measures were not as well suited to the purposes of this investigation as they could have been. For example, the questionnaire measures did not allow for the depth of exploration that was called for by the questions under investigation. While some modifications were made to each of the questionnaires in an effort to tailor them to the questions under investigation, each of the questionnaires provided only a glimpse into the knowledge and beliefs and sense of efficacy of educators, and socio-moral reasoning of student participants. Either through further modifications, or the design of measures specific to the current investigation, more specific and thorough findings might have been obtained. The qualitative data collected through educator interviews was useful in providing descriptive material and in verifying some of the data from educator questionnaires; however, the semi-structured interview format employed may have stifled some opportunity to clarify educator beliefs fully. Each instrument will be discussed separately to specifically address the limitations identified.

### **University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Questionnaire**

The modified UIC questionnaire, composed of three parts, was intended to measure knowledge of theory (Part A), sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education (Part B), and to capture demographic data (Part C).

In an effort to narrow the focus of this study, it was decided that knowledge of theory would pertain only to the knowledge of a social cognitive theory, domain

theory. It was anticipated, and based on the pilot conducted for the current investigation, that having some basic information about domain theory might prove useful for educators to accurately interpret the questions. For this reason a very brief synopsis of domain theory was provided on the front cover. Educators then needed to respond to the questions intended to gauge their understanding of social convention, moral, and personal domains within the context of the school environment. It is not known if another theoretical framework, such as a structural developmental framework, would have resonated any more clearly with the educator participants.

Further, in part, the original intent of the current investigation was to explore the relations between what educators know of moral development theory, their sense of efficacy and beliefs related to character education. While it was understood that a sense of efficacy and the beliefs of educators are strong predictors of success in the classroom, this section of the questionnaire did not allow for the depth of inquiry into specific practices of educators intended to develop the socio-moral reasoning aspect of student character. The applicability of data collected in this regard may have been increased with greater modifications to this portion of the educator questionnaire. Instead, it was determined that educator practices would be further explored through interviews with a smaller sample of the educator participants. This too had limitations and is further elaborated upon in the section on methodological limitations, including the limitation of researcher subjectivity.

### **Child Development Project Student Questionnaire for Elementary School Students**

Perhaps even greater than the limitations identified with the educator questionnaire are those identified with the student questionnaire. This questionnaire in its

original form was used to measure the impact of a universally delivered program (The Child Development Project) that was not developed using domain theory as a framework. This universal delivery model program was, however, concerned with cultivating the socio-moral well-being of students through the development of a sense of belonging to a community and commitment to its members, aspects that had been previously identified as important to socio-moral development by Nucci (2009), a proponent of social cognitive domain theory. Further, the Child Development Project was intended to support students in balancing their needs with the need for positive social relationships within the school environment. It was for these reasons believed to have applicability in the current investigation. To further align this instrument with the questions of the current investigation, modifications were made to the questionnaire, including shortening its length and adding open-response questions directly related to the elements of interest from social cognitive domain theory. However, in choosing which questions to eliminate from the original format, a Cronbach's alpha was not initially conducted. This would have enabled the researcher to select the questions from each section with the highest reliability levels and might have yielded more reliable results.

### **Methodological Issues**

The intent of this study was to explore any relations between educator knowledge and sense of efficacy and beliefs, and the socio-moral reasoning abilities of students. While the reliability of the UIC instrument intended to measure knowledge and beliefs of educators was satisfactory, the number of participants significantly limited the statistical analysis possible. For this reason, no relation can be confirmed statistically between what

educators know of moral development, and their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education.

Given that most educators tend to use “home-grown” or “grassroots” strategies for character education delivery (Benninga et al., 2006) rather than branded programs, it was the intent of this study to explore the relations between what educators know and do and the socio-moral reasoning of the students who experience different learning conditions. A second methodological shortcoming, then, is the inability to relate specific educators with the students in their care to explore for relations quantitatively between what educators know and do and student socio-moral reasoning. This was due to the low participant numbers available. This limitation significantly impacts generalizability of findings.

Further to the second limitation, there were not multiple classes of each grade within each setting from which to draw participants, which made comparisons by setting impossible. In an effort to narrow the focus of the study while still representing diverse demographics found in the participating school board, three schools were chosen at random, one to represent each overall demographic area. It was expected that there would be more than one class of each grade in the schools selected (e.g., two or more Grade 3, Grade 5 and Grade 8 classes). This did not turn out to be the case and efforts to secure additional schools to participate were not fruitful—leaving the population from which to invite participants limited. With only one class of each grade to draw upon, if a teacher elected not to participate (or the administrator felt it would be better not to involve an Occasional Teacher currently in the role), that grade was not represented in that particular school setting. Grade 3 is the only grade represented by educator and student participants

in each of the three settings. Comparisons between settings were not conducted for this reason.

Similarly, it was the intent to have one educator for each grade, from each of the three settings participate in an interview, for a total of 9 interviews. This would have enabled the researcher to explore more thoroughly the practices of the different educators within the context of grade and setting. While four educators from two of the settings did agree to interviews, only three interviews were completed as the fourth volunteer failed to respond to scheduling requests for reasons unknown to the researcher. There were no educators from the suburban setting who agreed to an interview. This meant that data was limited to questionnaire responses for these educators and specific further elaboration on their practices was not possible. Given that the educators did not differ significantly in their knowledge of moral development theory or sense of efficacy and beliefs, some general comparisons were made.

### **Limitations**

A number of limitations within the current study have contributed to the inability to confirm a clear relation between what educators know of moral development theory, and their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education and the socio-moral reasoning abilities of their students. The first limitation has to do with the study's design. By attempting to correlate the results of student groups to their primary educator, the number of participants upon which to draw was limited first by class size (one Grade 3 class for example, had a total of 11 students) and then by willingness/consent to participate (three students in this class returned their consents). To explore for these

relations in greater depth than was possible here may be best accomplished with a case study type design rather than the mixed-method design used here.

As Peshkin (1993) identified, the “stories” of participants in the educative process yield rich information for further understanding. Investigating the minutiae of the relationships between educators, their students, and the surrounding environment as a distinct situation may assist researchers and practitioners who are able to connect or identify with this descriptive data to replicate successes and avert failures. Regarding socio-moral development of students, as readers interpret the stories shared, their thinking may be altered, specifically through recognition of the complexity of socio-moral development as a process involving cognitive as well as emotional elements. Through a change in perspective may come change in practice.

With respect to instrumentation, two limitations are noteworthy. First, the depth of response given by students to the open response vignettes may not accurately reflect the thinking of the student participants. The researcher anticipated that some students would require assistance to record their responses to the open-ended questions in the final section of the questionnaire and did ask classroom teachers to help identify who might require a scribe or assistive technology to record their ideas. The researcher, in reviewing the depth of responses given by some students (not identified as needing assistance to record their thinking), realized that more detailed descriptions might have been obtained from all students through an alternative method of collection (e.g., an oral recording or through interviews).

Student ability and or willingness to respond truthfully to the questions are a second limitation. While outlining beforehand the importance of being truthful and

reading the questionnaire aloud to all participants, regardless of grade, to control for those who may struggle to read the questions, there is always the possibility that some participants may have answered questions falsely or may have misinterpreted the question asked. It has been suggested elsewhere (see Smetana et al., 2012 for example) that the linguistic complexity of the questions asked may also interfere with the ability of students to express their socio-moral reasoning. The reverse scoring of some items from the questionnaire was an attempt to control for untruthful responses; however there was no measure of comprehension to confirm that student participants adequately understood questions.

Further, the role of bias, the extent to which our worldview influences our beliefs, cannot be ignored for either student or educator participants. For example student participants may have answered some of their questions with the intent of pleasing the researcher, seeking approval for their thinking. Such practices may result from a sense of obligation rather than genuine beliefs. Similarly, the educators who elected to volunteer for this study may not be characteristic of all educators. They may have a heightened interest in the subject matter for any number of reasons or may be participating out of some allegiance to their school or administrator, in which case responses may be indicative of what they believe should be part of practices but may not necessarily be reality. For this reason, some detailed researcher observational notes might have been helpful.

Researcher bias similarly cannot be ignored, regardless of methods (quantitative or qualitative) employed (Peshkin, 1988). As an educator/researcher there is a bias in how this study was designed, the instruments and methodology employed, despite efforts to be



mindful of and minimize this reality. For example, while no field notes were maintained in conducting this study as there was no formal observation component, there were times when I caught myself affirming what educators did in their classrooms, perhaps with a facial expression or the occasional comment. As an educator, I could identify positively with some practices, and with others I might find reasons to object. Again, these biases may have been communicated despite best efforts to maintain an objective and detached persona.

The rationale for this study is reflective of some researcher bias. Given that I was at one time involved as a system leader in implementing the Ministry mandate to deliver character education in all Kindergarten to Grade 12 classrooms in Ontario's schools within my school board, I found the lack of direction from the Ministry of Education, and at times, understanding of others in the same role, discouraging and concerning. For example, when our school board fell in line with a few others in the region and determined that character education would take the form of reinforcing specific attributes where schools could hold assemblies and give out certificates for students who demonstrated these target qualities, I was disheartened, as my knowledge of socio-moral development aligned less with this "traditionalist" approach, and more with a social cognitive theoretical framework. Thus, this study utilized social cognitive domain theory and a social-information processing model along with a bio-ecological model and systems relational metatheory, as frameworks for the questions for exploration, instruments employed, and in interpreting results.

A final limitation was the issue of timing. Working with the parameters of the school calendar and recognizing that to determine any relation between what educators

do in their classrooms and student socio-moral reasoning would require students have significant exposure to the learning conditions meant that the data collection portion of this study could not get underway early in the school year. By the midpoint of the school year, when it would have been reasonable to expect that the learning climate was well established, it was a particularly busy time, as the Ministry of Education introduced a brand new report card, requiring substantial new learning and time from educators. This meant delaying the start of the data collection a little longer and consequently meant some data were collected quite late into the school year. This fact might also have limited the willingness of some educators to participate in the study, despite concerted efforts to recruit additional participants from the representative grades. Collecting data from students and staff in the month of June, when everyone is quite tired and already thinking about the summer months, may not be the most fruitful endeavour. Thus, timing of the data collection may have had an effect on the data obtained as well as the willingness of participants to consent. As already stated, low participant numbers impacted the statistical analyses possible, in significant ways.

### **Future Directions**

The results of the present study provide some support for previous studies conducted on educator knowledge of theory and sense of efficacy pertaining to character education (Nucci, et al., 2005) and the complex nature of socio-moral reasoning of students (Nucci & Turiel, 2009). Namely, this research supports earlier findings that educators have limited preparation to develop knowledge of moral development theory (Revell & Arthur, 2007) and cannot transfer what they do not know to their practice of delivering character education (Nucci et al., 2005). It further confirms that student socio-

moral reasoning is highly complex and does progress somewhat developmentally, (Nucci & Turiel, 2009; Smetana et al., 2012) as students become more skilled at interpreting and managing multi domain aspects of situations they encounter.

Accepting these findings, what remains to be further explored are differences in practice, if any exist, where educators have opportunity to advance knowledge of moral development processes, receiving ongoing support in their practice to develop the socio-moral aspect of student character. Such a study might follow a more experimental design to allow for measures with and without intervention (educator learning) at multiple points in the learning continuum. As educators in the present study identified both on their questionnaires and in interviews, they have not been taught how to develop the socio-moral aspect of student character, and so, while some student learning may be positive, it is not necessarily by intentional design.

An extension of educator learning is further inquiry into and measurement of student learning. Correlations, measuring aspects of socio-moral development included positive relations between supportiveness and school community, social competence, and intrinsic motivation. Further, a number of these variables were identified as differing significantly in this study by gender and grade, including sense of autonomy, feelings of supportiveness and sense of school community, in combination with levels of intrinsic/extrinsic and relational motivation. Variables showing correlations and/or differences should be assessed by educators and used to help guide their practices in supporting student development. Further study of how best to conduct and use this assessment data is required at multiple stages of student development to determine the impact on student socio-moral reasoning abilities and assist educators in the task at hand.

Next, there is a growing interest in human development as an ecological process (see R. Lerner, 2005; R. Lerner & Overton, 2008 for examples) that can be influenced by asset versus deficit based thinking (see Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000 for example). Given this interest, an examination of student engagement in the classroom and resilience promotion beyond the classroom, are worthy of examination. This examination may occur in relation to socio-moral development and educator perspective of students as asset or deficit based. How is student engagement impacted when educators view students positively, integrate domain understanding and concordant discipline in the learning conditions, and use strategies that endorse relational motivation?

Students who have a sense of autonomy, feel supported/competent and are connected to others, or have a sense of belonging typically are productive students (Harniss, Epstein, Ruser, & Pearson, 1999), and are engaged in their academic pursuits (Klem & Connell, 2004). Further, engagement is thought to be a protective factor, useful in promoting resilience (Morrison, Brown, D’Incau, Larson O’Farrell, & Furlong, 2006) and is of growing interest in education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Increasing engagement then may have benefits beyond the academic agenda. How do supportive learning conditions created by educators who view students from an asset perspective differ from those created by educators with more of a deficit perspective of students? How does the resulting learning condition act as a protective factor when later challenges are encountered?

Initiative has been identified as important to student well-being (Larson, 2000). Initiative, according to Larson (2000), is directly linked to intrinsic motivation and must occur in concert with focused concentration within the parameters of a reality-based

environment, and it must be sustained even when obstacles are encountered. Of intrinsic motivation, it has been noted that to sustain it there must be sufficient challenge to match skill level in the context of learning (Larson, 2011). Students need opportunities to develop initiative; they need to be both challenged and motivated. Sivan (1986) identified that motivation is a “socially negotiated process” (p. 210) and as such requires the nurturance of relationships. Thus classrooms must afford students opportunity to engage, be challenged, and persist with challenges over time to reach their goals, individually and within groups. These opportunities may begin with the interests of students or may be introduced by an educator but are then shaped by students to achieve goals established by the students themselves. This process is akin to the inquiry-based model for learning that has received recent attention within the Ministry of Education in Ontario. Will educators who support inquiry-based learning as a means for engaging students also create learning conditions which incorporate foundations for socio-moral development to occur, including sense of autonomy, feelings of supportiveness and belonging, competence, and intrinsic motivation? Together these capacities are believed to benefit student initiative and capacity for socio-moral reasoning. Instructional methods such as, collaborative group work opportunities, direct instruction in problem solving strategies using active listening and identification of shared interests would support students in learning to appreciate and work with divergent points of view. To assist students in parsing out the competing elements often present in complex social situations, instruction on the differences between moral principles and the purposes served by social conventions may be of benefit. Educators who use domain concordant discipline would help to reinforce these differences and may assist students in integrating this understanding into their

worldview. Students must be engaged in the learning process as active participants, and will develop increased feelings of competency from constructive feedback. Such instructional methods require further examination for the purpose of identifying their impact on positive youth development from a mental health and academic standpoint.

Finally, further study of longitudinal effects of differing exposure to learning conditions is needed to ascertain the extent of effect. For example, if a student experiences a learning condition which supports his or her sense of autonomy, advance his or her competency, nurtures feelings of supportiveness and belonging, as well as reinforcing relational and intrinsic motivation, during their primary schooling years, and then finds a less supportive learning condition for the junior or intermediate years, is there any protective factor left from the earlier learning conditions? Is there a critical time for students to experience these supportive conditions? Is there any effect that can be tracked into adulthood? Such an undertaking would require years of commitment to study and for that reason, may not be viewed favourably by researchers.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The purpose of the present study was to explore the moral development knowledge of educators, their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education and the socio-moral reasoning of students. This study provides a glimpse into current learning conditions with respect to educator knowledge, beliefs, and practices and student socio-moral reasoning within the context of public elementary school classrooms.

Assuming that educator knowledge and beliefs would be related to their actions in the classroom, educator knowledge of moral development and their beliefs pertaining to character education were explored. Educators were surveyed using a modified version of

the University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) questionnaire (Nucci et al., 2005) to explore their knowledge of moral development, specifically knowledge related to social cognitive domain theory and their sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to the delivery of character education.

How students mediate their needs with the needs of others, the desires (motivation) and beliefs (rationale) that guide them, is reflective of their socio-moral reasoning. To explore these aspects of student socio-moral reasoning a modified version of the Child Development Project questionnaire was utilized (see Battistich, 2003; Battistich et al., 2000; Battistich et al., 2004). Using this instrument, students from three target grades (Grade 3, 5, and 8) shared their perception of the levels of autonomy and supportiveness as well as sense of community in their learning environment. They described their interpersonal skills (conflict resolution and social competence tendencies) and responded to questions indicating their inclination to help others, weighing the moral and social convention elements present in everyday situations they encounter, while prioritizing relationships or instrumental gain opportunities.

Both theoretical and practical implications may be identified from the present study. Overall findings from the current investigation are mixed and serve to reinforce a claim made by Nucci and Turiel, (2009) that socio-moral reasoning and subsequent decision-making form a highly complex dynamic in children. This dynamic may be described as moral agency and is foundational to character development (Berkowitz & Bier, 2004). Findings within also serve to illustrate the importance of studying the complex relations between individuals and the context for learning to further understanding of positive human development (R. Lerner & Overton, 2008). Findings

related to educator knowledge of moral development and beliefs about character education validate claims that educators by and large do not receive support (Milson, 2003; Nucci et al., 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007) in developing their knowledge or skillset in this area. Given these findings, the present study indicates a practical need among educators for support in their work to develop student socio-moral reasoning as part of their cognitive development within the elementary school context and beyond.

To begin, finding that educators had relatively little theoretical knowledge of moral development was not a surprise given that it is not a focus in preservice programs, nor is it a priority for the in-service of practicing educators (Milson, 2003; Nucci et al., 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007). Despite this lack of theoretical knowledge, the educator participants appear to demonstrate in their practices some values that align generally with a social cognitive approach to moral development. While not formalized, as in the case with the Child Development Project (see Battistich, 2003; Battistich et al., 2000; Battistich et al., 2004), these educators do refer to some of the same strategies (e.g., using collaboration with students to generate class norms, providing constructive feedback, modeling, using developmental discipline and cooperative learning opportunities) in their practice.

The objectives of such practices are to create a learning environment where students experience a sense of belonging, feelings of competence/supportiveness, and can exercise autonomy. The style of leadership demonstrated by these educators is similar in nature to the authoritative parenting style and is characterized by high expectations, caring relationships, and a responsive, warm structure (Baker, et al., 2009). Given the lack of professional development provided, at either a preservice or in-service point,



these educators are relying on other knowledge when establishing the culture and climate in their classrooms, making the establishment of such learning conditions a game of chance for students to experience and benefit.

Based on the data obtained from educators using the modified UIC questionnaire (Nucci et al., 2005) and the anecdotal data from interviews, it is clear that intentional practices to differentiate between moral and social convention matters are not part of the participants' pedagogical repertoire. Understanding the differences between domains and being able to identify moral and convention elements in mixed domain situations would theoretically increase the likelihood that discipline would be developmentally appropriate and domain concordant. Students respond more positively to domain concordant discipline (Nucci, 1984), for example, guiding students to see raising one's hand to speak is a necessary convention to help with the smooth operation of the class, and that by speaking out they are potentially jeopardizing the learning of others, which would be unjust. Such an approach has the benefit of encouraging students to reflect on their motivation as well as the impact of their choices on others (Nucci, 2006). Ultimately the goal is for students to develop competency to recognize/prioritize moral and social convention domain elements present in their interpersonal relations without direction from others to do so.

Finding that students differ in their tendency toward intrinsic motivation and extrinsic motivation based on grade and classroom warrants further exploration. From a theoretical perspective, educators need to understand the impact of intrinsic motivation on interpersonal relationships as well as academic achievement. Intrinsic motivation has been thought of as the link between moral reasoning and subsequent action and is directly

related to student engagement. To develop this form of motivation is also believed to be the most effective way to enhance the relations between reasoning and action (Subbotsky, 1995) and as such is worthy of attention from educators and researchers alike. From a practical standpoint, educators who understand the role to be played by intrinsic motivation and that the capacity for intrinsic motivation is present in some children in Grade 3, and in many children in Grade 8 could, through this increased awareness, adjust their classroom practices to further develop intrinsic motivation in students. Again, looking to recent (see Christenson, Reschly, & Wylie, 2012), and some not so recent (see Dewey, 1913) literature pertaining to student engagement may prove fruitful in this regard. Understanding that intrinsic motivation can be related to other variables, such as supportiveness and autonomy is also of value. Further research into the conditions which support the development of intrinsic, and particularly, relational motivation, within the context of culturally diverse classrooms is needed.

Further, it may be of educational benefit to more clearly understand the role of relational motivation in relation to socio-moral reasoning and subsequent action. Having relationships within a social group, where compassion, self-sacrifice and kindness figure prominently, increases abilities to cooperate and understand thinking and feeling of others, making it more likely that members of such a group experience success (Seligman, 2011). In the current investigation, student participants differed in their preferences to prioritize relationships over instrumental gains when describing the actions they would take in response to the social vignettes. Given these differences, it may be of value to explore empirically the role to be played by relational motivation in socio-moral reasoning and subsequent action. Should it be found to have a mediating role between

socio-moral reasoning and subsequent action, educators would have good reason to build into their learning communities many opportunities for positive peer and educator–student relations. This would require targeted efforts to ensure that the nature of the relations among student peers and educators supports, rather than impedes development of autonomous socio-moral reasoning (DeVries, 1997). According to Piaget (1932/1965) relations based on obedience to authority and rules serve to impede socio-moral reasoning development and should be avoided to reduce dependence on others to govern actions.

Next, noting the differences by grade in student ability to incorporate both social and moral elements may help guide educators when modeling for students, strategies for problem solving and in addressing any transgressions in conduct. Helping students to identify moral principles, understand the purpose served by social conventions, giving them many opportunities to discuss and practice applying these understandings and to receive meaningful and constructive feedback may help to reinforce skill development. Such experiences will be beneficial in guiding students faced with complex real world situations as they draw on previous experiences to guide their decision making as part of their social information processing.

Some studies into the impact of branded character education programs have been problematized because they tend to have short-term effects, that is, student conduct may be adjusted to reflect the goals of the intervention as long as they are participating in the “program” but over the long term there is little evidence of effectiveness. Given that most educators do not employ branded programs but instead create learning conditions based on their pedagogy, it would be beneficial to study the long-term impact of learning

conditions that employ strategies intended to develop student autonomy, feelings of supportiveness, competence, belonging, relational/intrinsic motivation, as well as understanding of the complexity of moral and social convention domain elements present in many social situations. Are the effects of experiencing such environments lasting? What happens when students experience such environments at different developmental stages including early primary, early adolescence, and later adolescence? Are students in these environments better equipped to respond in complex social situations than those who do not experience such conditions? Are these school contexts characterized by greater incidences of altruistic and prosocial actions? These are questions worthy of further exploration as they may have far-reaching repercussions in greater society.

Given the complexity of socio-moral reasoning, it may be beneficial to examine empirically additional aspects of character in relation to reasoning and subsequent action. For example, expanding the variables under investigation to include further emotional as well as social competence variables might yield further insight into student thinking and subsequent actions, in particular, examining the relationship between actions and emotional consequences (both for the individual and those affected by their actions) in relation to student understanding of moral and social convention elements in complex social situations. Under what circumstances do students use an awareness of the emotional consequences in their decision-making? What attributions are they making to others? These questions would be best explored at various developmental stages and under different learning conditions, including participants who have been identified with psychopathologies.

Finally, findings confirming that educators do not receive support, either at a preservice or in-service stage of their profession, related to knowledge of moral development and strategies to facilitate socio-moral reasoning (Milson, 2003; Nucci, et al., 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007) calls for both intervention and further study. By providing some intervention to help ameliorate this situation, perhaps at a pre-service level and with regular “boosters” throughout an educator’s career, efficacy might be positively influenced. This requires long-term study examining both the optimum method of delivery/learning for educators and the influence this learning has on their perceptions and practices under different school conditions and at different points in their career.

While the findings of this study may not be generalizable due to a small sample size, this study does serve to highlight the present condition in some culturally diverse public elementary schools within the province of Ontario with regard to knowledge of moral development and sense of efficacy and beliefs related to character education among educators and socio-moral reasoning of students. By drawing attention to these present conditions, areas for further empirical research have been highlighted and include: (1) examining the conditions which support the development of intrinsic and particularly relational motivation within the context of culturally diverse classrooms, (2) examining the long-term effects of experiencing learning conditions which instruct students in domain identification and support feelings of belonging, supportiveness, competence, autonomy, intrinsic/relational motivation at different developmental stages, (3) examining the role of emotional consequence awareness in student thinking, and finally, (4) examining changes in educator practice and sense of efficacy with participation in professional development targeting socio-moral reasoning in concert with

cognitive development. Further research should include both quantitative and qualitative data collection to help capture the complexities of socio-moral development and incorporate participants representative of our pluralistic society.

In sum, educators were found to establish classroom practices intended to develop student socio-moral reasoning as part of their character education practices without theoretical knowledge of moral development as a guide. Educator sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education were found to range not in relation to years experience, suggesting that little changes with years in the classroom in this regard. Added to this finding is the self-report of two of the three educators interviewed who expressed concern over the fact that they had never been taught about moral development or how best to approach developing the socio-moral reasoning of their students and that 43% of the educators indicated uncertainly in how to identify and create lessons consistent with moral and social convention issues using the curriculum. These findings are consistent with earlier research identifying a gap in the education of teachers in North America to adequately equip them to deliver character education (Milson, 2003; Nucci et al., 2005; Revell & Arthur, 2007).

Also consistent with earlier research (Nucci & Turiel, 2009), student abilities to prioritize or coordinate moral principles and social convention elements in complex social situations were found to differ based on grade. Where the youngest student participants tended to prioritize one domain over another, the oldest student participants were most likely to coordinate the domains in their responses. Further, the tendency to prioritize relations over instrumental gain differed by grade and gender when describing desires/motivation in the social vignette responses.

Perhaps through the updating of preservice programs and the use of in-service learning opportunities for practicing educators, the level of knowledge of moral development can be increased. This, in conjunction with practical applications for the classroom/school environment, may increase the sense of efficacy and positively influence the beliefs of educators related to character education, thereby helping to increase their effectiveness (Milson, 2003). Through the purposeful application of identified practices that align with social cognitive domain theory methods for moral development (Nucci 2009) including: ensuring students have autonomy, are provided opportunity to develop competency, experience a sense of belonging/supportiveness and developmentally appropriate domain concordant discipline, the socio-moral reasoning abilities of students may be further developed. Relationships that support belonging are integral to well-being (Seligman, 2011), are thought to be integral to the development of autonomous socio-moral reasoning (DeVries, 1997), and a necessary part of student engagement (Sivan, 1986). To increase theoretical knowledge of moral development conjoined with practical applications for the classroom may increase educator feelings of efficacy and mean students will be well prepared to interpret and respond to the complex social situations they encounter as part of their interpersonal relationships.

This study provided a snapshot of current conditions related to the knowledge of moral development and the sense of efficacy and beliefs pertaining to character education of elementary school educators and the socio-moral reasoning abilities of students. Clear and statistically significant relations between what educators know and do in their classrooms and the socio-moral reasoning of students cannot be confirmed in the present study. Findings of significance related to correlations and differences in student

perceptions and abilities by gender and grade (strength of correlations between supportiveness and school community and differences in intrinsic and extrinsic motivation levels, in conjunction with the differences noted on abilities of students to coordinate or prioritize elements in mixed domain situations) should be of interest to educators and researchers alike who are concerned with developing student socio-moral reasoning as an aspect of character. These findings point to a need for further inquiry to understand how to intentionally create an optimal learning environment for the development of student socio-moral reasoning in concert with academic development. Such inquiry should occur within the context of public elementary and secondary schools, as representative of a pluralistic society. To focus solely on academic achievement of students and ignore their socio-moral development carries with it great risk for students and global society at large. Preparing students to be productive members of a pluralistic and peaceful global society will require that both academic and socio-moral elements of their being be developed and should be the aim of all public education.



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## Appendix A

### The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Moral Development and Education

#### Questionnaire

*Modified from its original format.*

The University of Illinois at Chicago (UIC) Moral Development and Education  
Questionnaire (Nucci et al., 2005)

#### Message to participants:

**This questionnaire contains three parts. Its intent is not to measure your familiarity with terminology, but to gather information about what you know of socio-moral development in general as well as your character education perspective. There is no expectation that you will be familiar with all terminology used. Domain theory refers to a social cognitive theory of moral development that argues there are three distinct domains: moral, social convention, and personal. Please complete all parts of the inventory.**

## **Part A: Moral Development and Character Education Assessment**

For each question below, please circle the answer that you believe *best* answers the question.

1. Morality and social-convention are distinguished on the basis that
  - a. morality is a higher stage of reasoning than social-convention.
  - b. morality deals with issues of justice and interpersonal welfare; social-convention refers to changeable social rules.
  - c. social-convention refers to societal standards; morality refers to personal religious beliefs.
  - d. convention is a subclass of morality.
  
2. In studies examining moral and conventional concepts all of the following have been found to be true except
  - a. morality is a function of religious affiliation.
  - b. moral transgressions are viewed as wrong whether or not there is a governing rule.
  - c. the prescriptive force of conventions depends upon the presence of a governing rule.
  - d. conventions vary by society and context while morality is independent of societal norms.
  
3. The following best illustrates an item in the personal domain
  - a. a child's sense that stealing is wrong.
  - b. a child's decision to wear her hair in braids instead of straight down.
  - c. a child raising his hand in order to speak in class.
  - d. a child insisting that  $2 + 2$  has to equal 4.
  
4. Domain overlap refers to
  - a. points of stage transition from conventional to postconventional morality.
  - b. issues which contain elements from more than one domain of social reasoning such as morality and convention.
  - c. places in the instructional process in which the teacher overlaps issues from one lesson to the next.
  - d. points where the teacher's authority overlaps or intersects with those of the school administration.

5. The morality of direct reciprocity generally first appears at what age?
- a. 7 to 10 years.
  - b. 3 to 5 years.
  - c. 12 to 14 years.
  - d. 14 to 16 years.
6. Concepts of convention as components of the structure of social systems generally appear at what grade level?
- a. preschool.
  - b. elementary school.
  - c. middle school.
  - d. high school.
7. The emotional climate of an elementary school classroom for students grades K–3 should be
- a. boisterous and kinetic because young kids have a lot of energy and enjoy having a lot of stimulation.
  - b. emotionally warm, calm, quiet, and predictable because young children find calm and predictable environments emotionally comforting.
  - c. one of mutual respect and fairness because this helps to create a sentiment of “goodwill” and an increased willingness of young children to treat others fairly.
  - d. a and c only.
  - e. b and c only.
  - f. all of the above.
8. When dealing with young children’s conflicts the most appropriate thing for the teacher to do is
- a. use domain appropriate teacher responses to directly solve the children’s conflicts.
  - b. remain calm and firmly direct the children to comply with classroom norms for appropriate behavior.
  - c. engage the children in domain appropriate discourse that will help them to construct their own solution to their interpersonal conflict.
  - d. stay out and let the children work things out on their own.
9. Which of the following statements is most appropriate for a teacher to make to a child who has just hit a classmate on the playground?
- a. We don’t allow that sort of behavior here.
  - b. John that really hurt Mike. How would you like it if others treated you that way?
  - c. John, your behavior is not what we expect of students at our school.
  - d. Please stop that, you are disrupting things for the rest of the children at recess.

10. A social studies unit on the forms of clothing worn by members of different social classes in ancient Egypt would be an appropriate issue for a values lesson focusing on which domain?
- conventional.
  - moral.
  - personal.
  - overlapping.
11. Which of the following teacher statements is most appropriate in response to children who are being too loud inside the classroom?
- Please be quiet, your noisiness is upsetting everyone else.
  - How would you feel if the other students were as noisy as you are being?
  - Children, I can't think when you are being so loud.
  - Please use your inside voice. This is the classroom, not the playground.
12. Which of the following would be the most appropriate consequence for a student who makes fun of the special education children at school?
- Have the student serve one hour of after-school detention.
  - Have the student work for a period helping the special education teacher tutor younger students in the special education class.
  - Have the student write an essay on the harm that is caused by making fun of other people.
  - Deduct five points from the student's grade for his actions.
13. Middle school teachers view dress codes as a matter of \_\_\_\_\_, while students tend to view dress as a \_\_\_\_\_ matter.
- morality, conventional
  - convention, moral
  - morality, personal
  - convention, personal
14. Half of the students in an eighth grade history class oppose capital punishment on the grounds that it is applied more often to the poor and does not deter crime. The other half of the students favor capital punishment on the grounds that it deters crime and is applied evenly across social classes. If the teacher wants to have her class to engage in a fruitful discussion about the morality of capital punishment she should:
- focus the discussion on the issues of fairness and harm raised in the positions maintained by her students.
  - focus the discussion on the social norms and conventions that have governed society's views of the issue.
  - first have the class read about the moral positions that others have taken.
  - first have the class explore the available information that bears on the factual assumptions being made by her students about capital punishment.

## Part B: Moral Development and Character Education Belief Instrument

### Directions:

As you read each of the following statements, please indicate your level of agreement by circling the appropriate letters in the left column.

SA=Strongly agree

A=Agree

U=Uncertain

D=Disagree

SD=Strongly disagree

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| SA   A   U   D   SD | 1. I am usually comfortable discussing issues of right and wrong with my students.   |
| SA   A   U   D   SD | 2. When a student has been exposed to negative influences at home, I do not believe that I can do much to impact the child's moral growth. |
| SA   A   U   D   SD | 3. I am confident in my ability to use the regular curriculum to generate moral discourse.   |
| SA   A   U   D   SD | 4. When a student shows greater respect for others, it is usually because teachers have been respectful toward students and other adults.  |
| SA   A   U   D   SD | 5. Teachers are usually not responsible when a child becomes more courteous.   |
| SA   A   U   D   SD | 6. I am usually at a loss as to how to help a student become more considerate of others.   |
| SA   A   U   D   SD | 7. I know how to use strategies that might lead to changes in students' concepts of fairness and concern for others.                       |
| SA   A   U   D   SD | 8. I know how to help my students learn to resist authority and social pressure to stand up for what is right.                             |
| SA   A   U   D   SD | 9. I am not sure that I can help my students to treat others fairly.   |

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| SA A U D SD | 10. I feel unprepared to use violations of classroom procedural rules as a context in which to develop students' understanding and appreciation of social conventions. |
| SA A U D SD | 11. When students demonstrate consideration for others it is often because teachers have encouraged students to treat one another with mutual respect.                 |
| SA A U D SD | 12. Teachers who spend time encouraging students to be respectful of others will see little change in students' social interactions.                                   |
| SA A U D SD | 13. When students value social justice it is often because their teachers have emphasized and demonstrated social justice in their classrooms.                         |
| SA A U D SD | 14. I am able to positively influence the moral development of a child who has little direction from parents.  |
| SA A U D SD | 15. There is little that I can do as a teacher to develop a sense of social justice in my students.  |
| SA A U D SD | 16. If parents notice that their children are more considerate of others, it is likely that teachers have fostered this tendency at school.                            |
| SA A U D SD | 17. I feel unprepared to use the regular curriculum as a basis to generate moral discourse and reflection.   |
| SA A U D SD | 18. Some students will not become more respectful of others even if they have had teachers who promote respect.  |
| SA A U D SD | 19. I feel confident that if I have a student who is untrusting and rude to others that I can help the child to become more trusting and considerate.                  |
| SA A U D SD | 20. Creating a trusting classroom environment has little influence over the moral orientations of children who come from uncaring and harsh environments.              |
| SA A U D SD | 21. I am not sure how to help students learn to stand up for what is right in the face of authority or peer pressure.  |
| SA A U D SD | 22. I feel confident in my ability to identify the moral and conventional domain issues contained within the regular academic curriculum.                              |

- |             |  |
|-------------|--|
| SA A U D SD | 23. If students are inconsiderate it is often because teachers have not sufficiently shown consideration in their treatment of students and others.    |
| SA A U D SD | 24. I often find it difficult to help a student understand that respect for others is important.   |
| SA A U D SD | 25. I feel unprepared to create lessons that are consistent with moral and conventional domain issues contained in the regular curriculum.             |
| SA A U D SD | 26. When a student becomes compassionate, it usually because teachers have created caring environments.  |
| SA A U D SD | 27. Encouraging students to resolve moral disputes in school results in children who will be better able to resolve moral conflicts outside of school. |
| SA A U D SD | 28. Sometimes I don't know what to do to help students become more compassionate.  |
| SA A U D SD | 29. Teachers cannot be blamed for students who are dishonest.  |
| SA A U D SD | 30. I feel confident in my ability to use the everyday interactions of my classroom to develop my students' sense of fairness and respect for others.  |
| SA A U D SD | 31. I am able to use the rules of my classroom as a context for children to learn the purposes of shared conventions and social norms.                 |
| SA A U D SD | 32. I am continually finding better ways to engage my students in their moral development.   |

**Part C: Background Information**

Please answer the following questions regarding your background and your school.

**A. Number of years teaching:** 0–3 \_\_\_\_ 3–6 \_\_\_\_ 6–9 \_\_\_\_ 9–12 \_\_\_\_ 12 + \_\_\_\_**B. Sex**            M        F**C. What grade level do you teach? (Circle all that apply)**

JK K 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8

**D. What subject area do you teach? (Circle all that apply).**

Art

Mathematics

PE

Music

Science

Technology

French

Social Studies

History

English

Special Education

Geography

**E. Where do you currently teach?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Urban setting

\_\_\_\_\_ Suburban setting

\_\_\_\_\_ Rural setting

**F. How would you describe the socioeconomic status of the students you teach generally?**

\_\_\_\_\_ Low family income

\_\_\_\_\_ Middle family income

\_\_\_\_\_ High family income

**G. How often do you typically integrate moral education into your teaching of the regular curriculum?****Please check only one.**



- ☐ Daily
- ☐ 2 –3 times per week
- ☐ Once per week
- ☐ 2 – 3 times per month
- ☐ Once per month
- ☐ Once per semester
- ☐ Never

**H. How would you characterize your school culture and climate?**

**Check all that apply.**

- ☐ warm and inviting
- ☐ supportive
- ☐ neutral
- ☐ reserved
- ☐ uncomfortable
- ☐ hostile

**I. Would you be willing to participate in a 40-minute structured interview with the researcher for this study?**

☐ Yes

☐ No

**J. Please indicate 3 days/times (over the next two weeks) that are preferred to conduct the student questionnaires with the students from your class:**

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*\*you will be contacted by telephone to confirm one of these dates.*

## Appendix B

### *Student Questionnaire (sections A-D) Section E Situational Vignettes*

*Extracted from the Child Development Project Student Questionnaire for Elementary School Students.*

#### A. STUDENT PERCEPTIONS OF FEELINGS ABOUT CLASSROOM AND SCHOOL

##### **Sense of Classroom as a Community**

##### 1. *Student Autonomy and Influence in the Classroom.* (1= Never to 5 = Always).

*Items:*

In my class students have a say in deciding what goes on.

(Never)				(Always)
1	2	3	4	5

In my class the teacher is the only one who decides on the rules. (R)

(Never)				(Always)
1	2	3	4	5

In my class the teacher and students decide together what the rules will be.

(Never)				(Always)
1	2	3	4	5

Students in my class can get a rule changed if they think it is unfair.

(Never)				(Always)
1	2	3	4	5

##### 2. *Classroom Supportiveness* (1= Disagree strongly to 5 = Agree strongly).

*Items:*

The students in my class don't really care about each other. (R)

(Disagree strongly)				(Agree strongly)
1	2	3	4	5

Students in my class help each other, even if they are not friends.

(Disagree strongly)				(Agree strongly)
1	2	3	4	5

Students in my class treat each other with respect.

(Disagree strongly)				(Agree strongly)
1	2	3	4	5

Students in my class work together to solve problems.

(Disagree strongly)

1

2

3

4

(Agree strongly)

5

### **Sense of School as a Community**

*Items:*

Students at this school work together to solve problems.

(Disagree strongly)

1

2

3

4

(Agree strongly)

5

Students in this school treat each other with respect.

(Disagree strongly)

1

2

3

4

(Agree strongly)

5

The students in this school don't really care about each other. (R)

(Disagree strongly)

1

2

3

4

(Agree strongly)

5

I feel that I can talk to the teachers in this school about things that are bothering me.

(Disagree strongly)

1

2

3

4

(Agree strongly)

5

Students in this school help each other, even if they are not friends.

(Disagree strongly)

1

2

3

4

(Agree strongly)

5

### **B. INTRAPERSONAL SELF-ASSESSMENTS**

**General Self-Esteem** (1= Disagree strongly to 5 = Agree strongly).

*Items:*

I like myself just the way I am.

(Disagree strongly)

1

2

3

4

(Agree strongly)

5

I wish I were different from the way I am. (R)

(Disagree strongly)

1

2

3

4

(Agree strongly)

5

**Sense of Autonomy** (1= Not at all true, 2= Sort of true, 3 = Very true).

*Items:*

I decide what I think is right, and then I do it.

(Not true at all)

1

(Sort of true)

2

(Very true)

3

I decide what I want to do, and then I do it.  
 (Not true at all) (Sort of true) (Very true)  
 1 2 3

Even when I have the choice, I don't like to decide things for myself. (R)  
 (Not true at all) (Sort of true) (Very true)  
 1 2 3

I usually don't get to choose what I do. (R)  
 (Not true at all) (Sort of true) (Very true)  
 1 2 3

I don't have any choice about most of the things I do. (R)  
 (Not true at all) (Sort of true) (Very true)  
 1 2 3

### C. INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

**Social Competence** (1= Disagree strongly to 5 = Agree strongly).

*Items:*

I listen carefully to what other people say to me.  
 (Disagree strongly) (Agree strongly)  
 1 2 3 4 5

I'm very good at working with other children.  
 (Disagree strongly) (Agree strongly)  
 1 2 3 4 5

I know how to disagree without starting a fight or argument.  
 (Disagree strongly) (Agree strongly)  
 1 2 3 4 5

I'm not very good at helping people. (R)  
 (Disagree strongly) (Agree strongly)  
 1 2 3 4 5

I'm good at finding fair ways to solve problems.  
 (Disagree strongly) (Agree strongly)  
 1 2 3 4 5

### Conflict Resolution Skill/Relational or Instrumental Inclination

*Items:*

Suppose you put your pencil down for a minute and a boy in your class comes along and takes it. You ask him to give it back, but he says "no." What would you do next?

- A. Take the pencil away from him.
- B. Tell him that you really need your pencil to finish your work.
- C. Ask the teacher to make him give it back
- D. Help him try to find another pencil, or tell him he can use yours after you are finished with it.
- E. Tell him that you will hit him or take something of his if he doesn't give back your pencil.

What if what you just picked didn't work? What would you do then?

- A. Take the pencil away from him.
- B. Ask the teacher to make him give it back.
- C. Help him try to find another pencil, or tell him that he can use your pencil after you are finished with it.
- D. Tell him that you will hit him or take something of his if he doesn't give you back your pencil.
- E. Find another pencil for yourself.

Suppose you are at the beach, making a sandcastle. You have just about finished it and are digging a tunnel, to let water come around the castle. Just then, a boy comes over and starts building another sandcastle right where your tunnel needs to go. You ask him to build his castle somewhere else, but he keeps on building it right there. What would you do next?

- A. Tell him to go away.
- B. See if the two of you can work together on both castles.
- C. Explain to him that he is blocking your tunnel.
- D. Get the lifeguard or some other adult to make him move.
- E. Knock down the other castle.

What if what you just picked didn't work? What would you do then?

- A. Go away and do something else.
- B. See if the two of you can work together on both castles.
- C. Explain to him that he is blocking your tunnel.
- D. Get the lifeguard or some other adult to make him move.
- E. Hit him.

Suppose you're making a car out of Lego. You have laid out all the pieces you think you'll need for the car. While you are working on it, a girl comes over and, without

asking, takes some of your pieces. You ask for the pieces back, but she doesn't give them back. What would you do next?

- A. Explain why you need the pieces for the car you are making.
- B. Grab the pieces back.
- C. Suggest that the two of you make something together.
- D. Find someone to help you get the pieces back.
- E. Make something else that doesn't need as many pieces.

What if what you just picked didn't work? What would you do then?

- A. Explain why you need the pieces for the car you are making.
- B. Let her have all the pieces, and find something else to do.
- C. Grab the pieces back.
- D. Suggest that the two of you make something together.
- E. Find someone to help you get the pieces back.

#### D. SOCIAL/MORAL ORIENTATIONS

**Intrinsic Prosocial Motivation** (1= Not a reason, 2= A small reason, 3=A big reason).

*Items:*

*When you help another student in this class, why do you usually do it?*

Because I think it is good to help.

(Not a reason)	(A small reason)	(A big reason)
1	2	3

Because I am concerned about the other person.

(Not a reason)	(A small reason)	(A big reason)
1	2	3

Because I would feel bad if I didn't.

(Not a reason)	(A small reason)	(A big reason)
1	2	3

*When you try not to make noise in this class why do you usually do it?*

Because it would be wrong to disturb other students who are trying to work.

(Not a reason)	(A small reason)	(A big reason)
1	2	3

Because I would feel bad if my noisiness stopped someone else from learning something.

(Not a reason)	(A small reason)	(A big reason)
1	2	3

Because I am thinking about how I would feel if I was trying to concentrate and others were making noise.

(Not a reason)

1

(A small reason)

2

(A big reason)

3

### Extrinsic Prosocial Motivation

*Items:*

*When you help another student in this class, why do you usually do it?*

So I will get help in return.

(Not a reason)

1

(A small reason)

2

(A big reason)

3

Because the teacher told me to help.

(Not a reason)

1

(A small reason)

2

(A big reason)

3

Because I want to get a reward or praise from the teacher.

(Not a reason)

1

(A small reason)

2

(A big reason)

3

*When you try not to make noise in this class why do you usually do it?*

I (or my group) will get points or a prize if I (we) can keep quiet.

(Not a reason)

1

(A small reason)

2

(A big reason)

3

Because I'll get in trouble if I make noise.

(Not a reason)

1

(A small reason)

2

(A big reason)

3

Because the teacher told us to be quiet.

(Not a reason)

1

(A small reason)

2

(A big reason)

3

## Section E. Student Vignettes and Questions

### DOMAIN CO-ORDINATION OR SUBORDINATION/RELATIONAL OR INSTRUMENTAL MOTIVATION

1. You are waiting to get on a bus when you notice another passenger, someone else from your school, drops a \$10.00 bill on the ground. What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances? (GRADE 3, 5, AND 8)
  
2. You are playing a game of soccer when one of the players begins to argue about a goal being allowed and starts pushing another of the players. Seeing this you get involved – What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances? (GRADE 3, 5, AND 8)
  
3. You are late for class again – and know that you will likely be given a detention if you don't make it to school on time. On your way you come across another student who has just fallen off their bike and are crying, holding their knee. What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances? (GRADE 8)
  
4. During class, the teacher is called away for a few moments to assist a student who is ill in the hallway. The students remaining in the classroom have work they are doing. A couple of students start to throw paper planes and erasers across the classroom. What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances? (GRADE 3)
  
5. You and your friends decide to start a “club”. No one else can join your club, in fact when someone else from your class asks to “hang out” with you at break time, you tell them you can't because they aren't in the “club”. When your classmate looks away tearfully what do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances? (GRADE 5)



## Appendix C

### Structured Interview Questions for Educators

#### SENSE OF CLASSROOM AS A COMMUNITY

When establishing the routines for your classroom at the beginning of the year, please describe your practice:

(Prompts: Do you tell the class the rules? Ask the class what the rules should be?)

When rules are not adhered to, what do you do?

To help students feel that they belong and are cared for by others, please describe the educational strategies you implement in your classroom:

(Prompts: Do you encourage students to help one another? Do you create situations where students must work together to accomplish tasks? )

What do you find most challenging about trying to establish this condition in your classroom?

#### SOCIAL/INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

What do you believe to be the most effective ways to establish and maintain positive relationships among all members of this learning community?

When students have conflicts, what is it you feel they should be advised to do?

(Prompts: See a teacher for a solution, talk to each other)

#### SOCIAL/MORAL ORIENTATIONS

In your view why should teachers help students differentiate between moral and social convention issues? Is this important? Why? or Why not?

How do you go about this in your classroom?

#### CONFIRMATION OF STUDENT SELF-REPORT ON BEHAVIOUR

How would you describe the actions of student(s) day to day and in situations of conflict?

Thank you very much for your time and sharing your thoughts today. Your contribution to this research is greatly appreciated. Do you have any questions?

## Appendix D

### Vignette Scoring Rubric

How students choose to act is related to their beliefs (what they understand to be the rationale for their choice) and their desires (their motivation for acting on these beliefs).

Motivation/ Desires	Instrumental Motivation	Relational Motivation	Combined Motivation	Other
Rubric Description	Student response considers opportunity for personal gain only (physical, social–emotional, monetary)	Student response considers needs of others (physical, social–emotional, monetary), current or potential relationship with others	Student response considers both the needs another and their own personal needs/wants (physical, social–emotional, monetary)	Student response does not align with instrumental, relational, or combined motivation as described here.
Code Assigned	1	2	3	4

Rationale/ Beliefs	Social Convention	Moral Principle	Combination of Social and Moral	Other
Rubric description	Student response indicates awareness of a social rule (i.e., rules of a game/situation) or authority (i.e., a teacher/parent)	Student response indicates awareness of principles of justice (what's fair) and/or concern for human welfare	Student response indicates both concern for what is fair/just, for human welfare and an awareness of a social rule or authority	Student response does not align with awareness of a social convention, a moral principle, or a combination of the two beliefs as described here
Code Assigned	1	2	3	4

## Appendix E

### Vignette Coding Guide for Interrater Assessment with Student Responses

#### Vignette 1

You are waiting to get on a bus when you notice another passenger, someone else from your school, drops a \$10.00 bill on the ground. What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances? (Grade 3, 5, and 8)

#### Student Responses

*S514*

I would call him before he gets on the bus and give it to him. I would do it because I know it's not mine. I wouldn't choose differently at all.

*S38*

I would pick it up and tap him on the shoulder and say you dropped your \$10.00 bill on the floor because it is not right to steal.

*S817*

I would give it back because that could be his lunch money and he needs it for next time. I wouldn't choose a different solution under any circumstances because I wouldn't be a trustworthy person to others.

*U320*

I would try and find the passenger that dropped it because maybe that person needed it to buy a lunch after school. No I wouldn't choose to do something different.

*U522*

I would pick it up and give it to him because what happened if he needed it in the future. I wouldn't choose differently under any circumstances.

*R35*

I would give back the \$10 bill because it's not my money. I wouldn't do anything different.

---

**Vignette 2**

You are playing a game of soccer on the playground when one of the players begins to argue about a goal being allowed and starts pushing another of the players. Seeing this you get involved – What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances? (Grade 3, 5, 8)

**Student Responses**

*S516*

Tell everyone to calm down and say it's just a game because someone could get hurt and I could too.

*U310*

I would get the coach so the coach can stop the fight and nobody gets hurt.

*S814*

I would jump in-between the person being pushed and the other person who pushed him and say that I am not sure if it was in or not and you shouldn't be pushing people around because for one it is not polite to push someone and two fighting is not the answer to whether or not the goal was in. No I would not choose differently under any circumstances.

*R32*

I would say it is just a game so we should have fun. It's a game you're supposed to have fun not get hurt. I would not do anything else under any circumstances.

*R82*

First, I would stop the pushing especially because someone could get hurt. Then I would tell the player who started the pushing that we could make it fair by adding or taking away a point from each team. I would do this because then whatever option the players agreed on would make both of them happy and make the situation fair. I would not do differently under any circumstances.

---

**Vignette 3 – grade 3**

During class, the teacher is called away for a few moments to assist a student who is ill in the hallway. The students remaining in the classroom have work they are doing. A couple of students start to throw paper planes and erasers across the classroom. What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances? (GRADE 3)

**Student Responses**

*S36*

I would tell the teacher if there was one in the hallway. I would tell the teacher because they will get in trouble and they are not following the rules. I would not use something to solve this problem because I think that's a good idea.

**Vignette 3 – grade 5**

You and your friends decide to start a “club”. No one else can join your club, in fact when someone else from your class asks to “hang out” with you at break time, you tell them you can't because they aren't in the “club”. When your classmate looks away tearfully what do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances? (GRADE 5)

**Student Responses**

*U523*

I would decide to quit being in the club and go play with him. I would do that so he doesn't feel left out. No I would not choose differently under any circumstances.

**Vignette 3 – grade 8**

You are late for class again – and know that you will likely be given a detention if you don't make it to school on time. On your way you come across another student who has just fallen off their bike and are crying, holding their knee. What do you do? Why? Would you choose differently under any circumstances? (GRADE 8)

*S819*

I would stop to help the kid and get someone else to help them (e.g., parent, teacher, neighbor etc.) I would also try to help the student calm down until someone can come. I wouldn't mind getting a detention to help someone else. If the circumstances were different – I wouldn't choose differently.

*R87*

I would continue to school, as the injury is probably minor to the child and would not need much help. If the injury was more serious, as if he cracked open his head, I would call for help or 911 and help the kid.

## Interrater Results

Please use the scoring outline to indicate your assessment of each sample response.

Vignette	Student Code	Beliefs	Motivation	Comments
One	S514	2	2	-“I know it’s not mine” shows consideration of the impact on others Q: does “I know it’s not mine” indicate awareness of the social rule that stealing is wrong?
	S38	3	2	-“not right to steal” could be considered both a social rule and a principle of justice
	S817	2	3	-considers the monetary needs of others (lunch money) -also considers personal gain-wants to be a trustworthy person
	S320	2	2	-considers monetary need -considers moral principle –find the person who dropped it because it doesn’t belong to you
	U522	2	2	-considers the person’s need for the money in the future -shows concern for human welfare (future need for the money)
	R35	2	2	-awareness of justice – don’t keep what is not yours -giving back the money considers the needs of others Q: does “It’s not my money” indicate awareness of the social rule that stealing is wrong?
Two	S516	3	3	-“calm down, just a game” considers the rules of the game (no physical contact) and the concern for the welfare of others (wants everyone to calm down so no one gets hurt) -considers physical needs of self and others (doesn’t want anyone to get hurt)

	U310	3	3	<p>-desire to involve an adult indicates an awareness of authority but also considers that no one will get hurt if an adult gets involved</p> <p>-“nobody gets hurt” –considering the welfare of self as well as others</p>
	S814	3	2	<p>-awareness of social rules (not polite to push and fighting is not the answer)-this could also be considered an awareness of what is fair</p> <p>-by stepping in and stopping the fighting, the student considers the well-being of others</p>
	R32	3	2	<p>-considers both the rules of the game (supposed to be fun) and the well-being of others (doesn't want anyone to get hurt)</p> <p>-doesn't really indicate the need to avoid personal harm, just makes a general statement that you shouldn't get hurt playing games</p> <p>Q: Could this be considered preserving personal safety?</p>
	R82	2	2	<p>-wants to make things fair by taking a point from/adding a point to each team</p> <p>-considers the physical needs of others</p> <p>Q: Does the desire to make everyone happy indicate an awareness of maintaining current relationship with others?</p> <p>Q: Could the desire to make everything fair indicate an awareness of social rules?</p>

		Belief	Motivation	
Three	S36	3	4	<p>-shows awareness of social rules (get the teacher when someone is not following the rules) and a sense of justice (you should get in trouble for not following the rules)</p> <p>-doesn't indicate the need for personal gain or the desire to protect others</p> <p>Q: Could the student be considering personal gain? e.g. "If I tell the teacher, I will prove that I am responsible"</p> <p>Q: Does the desire to stop things from being thrown around a room indicate a desire to protect the physical well-being of others?</p>
	U523	2	2	<p>-shows concern for human welfare –doesn't want to hurt the feelings of another person</p> <p>-considers the emotional needs of the other student but does not show concern for self (not worried about what the friends in the club will think)</p> <p>Q: Could not wanting to leave someone out be considered a social rule?</p>
	S819	2	2	<p>-considers the emotional and physical welfare of the injured student but does not show desire for personal gain (doesn't care about getting a detention)</p>
	R87	2	3	<p>-considers own needs by saying he/she would not stop if the injury was minor (doesn't want detention) but does account for the physical well-being of others by saying he/she would get help if the injury was serious</p> <p>-shows some concern for human welfare</p>







d. overlapping							
10	d	a	a	a	d	d	a
<p>Which if the following teacher statements is most appropriate in response to children who are being too loud inside the classroom?</p> <p>a. Please be quiet, your noisiness is upsetting everyone else.</p> <p>b. How would you feel if the other students were as noisy as you are being?</p> <p>c. Children, I can't think when you are being so loud.</p> <p>d. Please use your inside voice. This is the classroom, not the playground.</p>							
11	d	d	d	d	d	d	d
<p>Which of the following would be the most appropriate consequence for a student who makes fun of the special education children at school?</p> <p>a. Have the student serve one hour of after school detention.</p> <p>b. Have the student work for a period helping the special education teacher tutor younger students in the special education class.</p> <p>c. Have the student write an essay on the harm that is caused by making fun of other people.</p> <p>d. Deduct five points from the student's grade for his actions.</p>							
12	b	b	b	b	b	b	b
<p>Middle school teachers view dress codes as a matter of _____, while students tend to view dress as a _____ matter.</p> <p>a. morality, conventional</p> <p>b. convention, moral</p> <p>c. morality, personal</p> <p>d. convention, personal</p>							
13	c	d	d	d	d	d	d
<p>Half of the students in an eighth grade history class oppose capital punishment on the grounds that it is applied more often to the poor and does not deter crime. The other half of the students favor capital punishment on the grounds that it deters crime and is applied evenly across social classes. If the teacher wants to have her class to engage in a fruitful discussion about the morality of capital punishment she should:</p> <p>a. focus the discussion on the issues of fairness and harm raised in the positions maintained by her students.</p> <p>b. focus the discussion on the social norms and conventions that have governed society's views of the issue.</p> <p>c. first have the class read about the moral positions that others have taken.</p> <p>d. first have the class explore the available information that bears on the factual assumptions being made by her students about capital punishment.</p>							
14	d	a	d	d	a	a	d

These items are scored Strongly Agree (5) to Strongly Disagree (1) unless reverse scored, indicated with an R in the Item# column. This section measures educator beliefs and sense of efficacy related to character education.

Part B Item #	Educator Participant						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
1.	I am usually comfortable discussing issues of right and wrong with my students						
	SA	SA	A	A	SA	A	SA
2R	When a student has been exposed to negative influences at home, I do not believe that I can do much to impact the child's moral growth.						
	D	D	SD	D	SD	SD	D
3	I am confident in my ability to use the regular curriculum to generate moral discourse.						
	SA	SA	A	A	SA	U	SA
4	When a student shows greater respect for others, it is usually because teachers have been respectful toward students and other adults.						
	A	A	U	U	SA	U	SA
5R	Teachers are usually not responsible when a child becomes more courteous.						
	D	SD	U	D	SD	U	D
6R	I am usually at a loss as to how to help a student become more considerate of others.						
	D	D	D	D	SD	D	SD
7	I know how to use strategies that might lead to changes in students' concepts of fairness and concern for others.						
	A	SA	A	A	SA	A	A
8	I know how to help my students learn to resist authority and social pressure to stand up for what is right.						
	A	A	A	A	A	U	SA
9R	I am not sure that I can help my students to treat others fairly.						
	D	D	D	D	SD	D	SD
10R	I feel unprepared to use violations of classroom procedural rules as a context in which to develop students' understanding and appreciation of social conventions.						
	D	SA	D	D	D	U	SD
11	When students demonstrate consideration for others it is often because teachers have encouraged students to treat one another with mutual respect.						
	A	S	U	U	A	SA	A
12R	Teachers who spend time encouraging students to be respectful of others will see little change in students' social interactions.						
	D	SA	D	D	SD	SD	SD

13	When students value social justice it is often because their teachers have emphasized and demonstrated social justice in their classrooms.						
	D	A	A	U	A	U	A
14	I am able to positively influence the moral development of a child who has little direction from parents.						
	A	A	A	A	A	A	SA
15R	There is little that I can do as a teacher to develop a sense of social justice in my students.						
	D	SD	D	D	SD	SD	SD
16	If parents notice that their children are more considerate of others, it is likely that teachers have fostered this tendency at school.						
	U	U	U	U	A	U	SA
17R	I feel unprepared to use the regular curriculum as a basis to generate moral discourse and reflection.						
	D	D	D	D	D	A	SD
18R	Some students will not become more respectful of others even if they have had teachers who promote respect.						
	D	A	A	A	A	SA	D
19	I feel confident that if I have a student who is untrusting and rude to others that I can help the child to become more trusting and considerate						
	A	A	U	U	A	A	A
20R	Creating a trusting classroom environment has little influence over the moral orientations of children who come from uncaring and harsh environments.						
	D	SD	D	D	D	SD	D
21R	I am not sure how to help students learn to stand up for what is right in the face of authority or peer pressure.						
	D	D	D	D	D	A	SD
22	I feel confident in my ability to identify the moral and conventional domain issues contained within the regular academic curriculum.						
	A	D	A	D	A	SD	A
23	If students are inconsiderate it is often because teachers have not sufficiently shown consideration in their treatment of students and others.						
	D	A	U	U	D	D	D
24R	I often find it difficult to help a student understand that respect for others is important.						
	D	D	D	D	D	D	SA
25R	I feel unprepared to create lessons that are consistent with moral and conventional domain issues contained in the regular curriculum.						
	D	U	D	U	D	A	SD
26	When a student becomes compassionate, it usually because teachers have created caring environments.						
	U	A	U	U	U	U	A

27	Encouraging students to resolve moral disputes in school results in children who will be better able to resolve moral conflicts outside of school.						
	SA	A	A	A	SA	SA	A
28R	Sometimes I don't know what to do to help students become more compassionate.						
	D	D	A	A	D	A	SD
29	Teachers cannot be blamed for students who are dishonest.						
	A	U	U	SA	SA	SA	SA
30	I feel confident in my ability to use the everyday interactions of my classroom to develop my students' sense of fairness and respect for others.						
	SA	SA	A	A	SA	A	SA
31	I am able to use the rules of my classroom as a context for children to learn the purposes of shared conventions and social norms.						
	A	SA	A	A	A	U	SA
32	I am continually finding better ways to engage my students in their moral development.						
	SA	SA	A	A	SA	U	SA

This section collected demographic details from the educator participants.

Part C Item #	Educator Participant						
	#1	#2	#3	#4	#5	#6	#7
1	Years teaching						
	9-12	9-12	0-3	3-6	3-6	12+	12+
2	Gender						
	F	M	F	F	F	F	F
3	Grade taught						
	3	5	8	3	5	3	8
4	Subjects taught						
	Core	Core	Core	Core	Core	Core	Core
5	Setting						
	Suburban	Suburban	Suburban	Urban	Urban	Rural	Rural
6	Socio-economic status						
	Mid	Mid	Mid	Low	Low	Mid	Mid
7	Frequency of moral lesson						
	2-3x /month	Daily	2-3x /Week	2-3x /Week	Daily	1x/Week	Daily

